



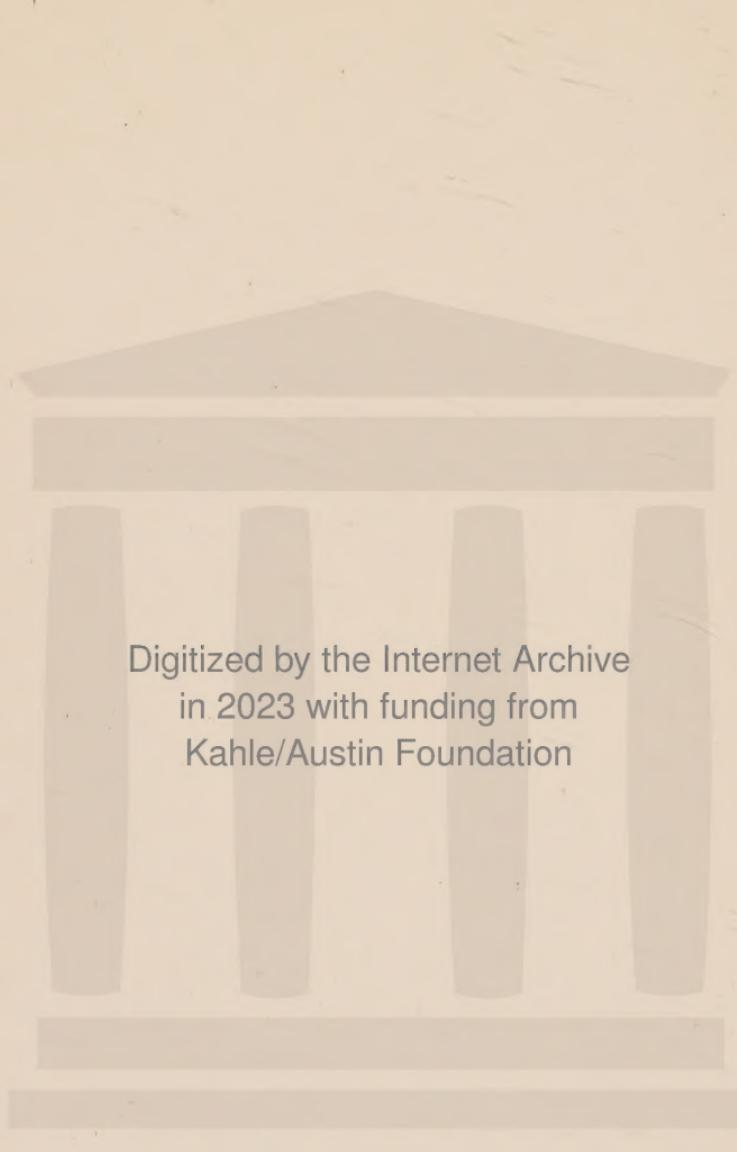
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THE SPIRIT AND THE  
INCARNATION

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## FROM REVIEWS OF THE FIRST EDITION

"It may be questioned whether in recent years there has appeared, at home or abroad, any theological work more deserving of careful study. He who intelligently reads it once will inevitably read it again and again."—Professor MARCUS DODS in the *British Weekly*.

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EDINBURGH: T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET.

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT, AND CO. LTD.

NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.

TORONTO: THE PUBLISHERS' SYNDICATE LIMITED.

300

# THE SPIRIT AND THE INCARNATION

*In the Light of Scripture, Science, and  
Practical Need*

BY THE

REV. W. L. WALKER  
LAURENCEKIRK (FORMERLY OF GLASGOW)

*SECOND EDITION*

*REVISED THROUGHOUT AND RESET*

EDINBURGH  
T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET  
1901

W17725  
1901

TO

My Wife

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

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I HAVE reason to be thankful for the very kind way in which this Book has been received, and it is now sent forth again in a revised, enlarged, and, I trust, improved Edition.

Dealing as it does with many of the most important subjects of Theology, sometimes in a new way, the Book could not escape criticism ; but the criticism has been, with scarcely an exception, expressed in the most friendly manner, and I have benefited from the whole of it.

One of the most generous of my reviewers has asked, Why in a Book which seeks to illustrate the personality of the Spirit He should be regularly designated by the neuter pronoun ? Others have noted the same thing as objectionable. For the practice the following reasons may be stated : (1) I am particularly anxious to avoid those Tritheistic implications which I believe have done much to obscure the truth concerning the Holy Spirit, and which we are very apt to suggest when we say "He" for both God and His Spirit. The Spirit is not a separate Person from God, but is the Spirit of God. (2) One of the chief objects of this Book is to show that *in Christ* the Spirit is with us in Divine-human personal form ; but this is the presence of God in Christ, not that of a separate Person from God and from Christ. (3) I desire to emphasise those *Ethical* influences in which the Holy Spirit, and, in the Spirit, both God and Christ, come to us, which are wider than anything that we usually associate with a 'person.' "It" is thus

used instead of ‘He,’ not because the Spirit is *less* than ‘personal,’ but because it is *greater* than what we usually understand by the word.

While throughout this Edition I have sought to make the treatment of the various subjects dealt with more full and clear, among the chief *additions* may be noted: A defence of so-called “metaphysical” inquiries, p. 230; a fuller treatment of the relation of the Incarnation to Redemption, p. 253; of the “two natures” in Christ, p. 256; of the “twofold consciousness,” p. 259 and p. 277 (where the “single consciousness” is defined); of “the miraculous,” p. 311; of the apparent “leap” from the impersonal to the personal presence of God in the world, p. 328; of the Resurrection of Christ, p. 341; of the relation of Criticism to Christ, pp. 366–7; and of the Holy Spirit as Love, p. 385.

To the Chapter dealing with the important subject of the Atonement the chief addition has been a passage at p. 140; but I hope ere long to be able to deal with this subject more fully, especially in view of recent criticism of the Gospels and of the doctrine of Evolution.

My chief aim has been to show the *reality* of the Incarnation of God in Christ and its bearing on our own Eternal life of Sonship toward God through that Spirit which comes to us in and through Christ, and which is the universal Creative Spirit. I have sought also to show that it is only as the culmination of an *Ethical* process—one with the great world-process—that the Ethical and Spiritual God can become incarnate in humanity, or can enter the world as He does in Christ.

Although writing positively and criticising what others have said, I am conscious of my own limitations, and seek only to make a contribution to that reconstruction of Theology which is the great task before us at present, and

at the same time to stimulate Christian life and effort by showing the Reality of that entrance of God into our Humanity, which becomes the source of all-sufficient Grace and the Power on which we can draw for our *Spiritual* life and work as freely as we draw on our physical environment for our *natural* life and work. At this time, when so many questions are raised by Criticism and concerning "the miraculous," and when the human side of the Person of Christ stands forth so prominently, it is to be hoped that these pages may (besides bringing to the front the abiding element of Power in Christianity) do something towards showing the deeper foundations of our faith in the Incarnation, Presence, and Grace of God in Christ. Written as they have been in the light of our knowledge of that Divine method of working which we speak of as an *Evolution*—to the reality of which in the religious sphere the Bible itself has become the great witness—I trust that they may help to show that those unique facts which have been described as 'miraculous' remain in all their truth, and are not less Supernatural and Divine, even though we see them to have been the results of the normal working of God in His world.

I would fain conclude with the words of Augustine at the close of his volume on the Trinity: "O Lord . . . whatever I have said that is of Thine, may they acknowledge who are Thine; if anything of mine own, may it be pardoned by Thee and by those who are Thine."

CONGREGATIONAL MANSE,  
LAURENCEKIRK, May 1901.



## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

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THE late Dr. Dale has left on record the almost unutterable feelings that stirred within his soul when he first realised that Jesus Christ is *alive*. He thought that he had always believed it, and he had often preached it, but never till one ever-to-be-remembered moment did he realise it. To help towards the realisation of this great Christian fact is one of the chief motives of the publication of this Book. The writer, too, for years thought he believed it; but it was not till after he had, for a time, lost all faith in the ordinary evangelical conception of Christianity that, as a result of the course of study here represented, it became a living truth, and under its influence he was gradually led back to the full evangelical faith.

There are many, it is believed, who, in this transition period, will be glad to see an attempt to show, from the surest sources, what the new and distinctive thing in Christianity really is, with an endeavour to understand and state, in an independent way, the doctrine of "the Spirit," and, in general, to set forth the evangelical doctrines of the Atonement and salvation in Christ, of His Person as at once truly man and yet God in human form, of the Trinity and yet true Unity of God, of the Incarnation as at once the culmination of all the Divine working in the world and an actual new personal entrance of God into the world, of the Immanence of God as a growing reality in its manifestation, and of the present relation of Christ to God and to ourselves, in keeping with the presuppositions of modern

thought. So far as I know, the view of the Spirit and its work, culminating in the Incarnation, and again proceeding in greater fulness therefrom, including in it the actual presence and power of the living Christ, and of the Incarnation as the result of a *process* embracing the entire Divine working in Nature and in Grace (while at the same time the actual personal entrance of God into our Humanity), has not yet been formally set forth, although many lines of thought are leading towards the conception of the Incarnation as a process; and it is in this view I believe we shall be able to obtain a Christian Theology which does justice to both the Divine and the human in Christ, and which shows us God as becoming truly incarnate in Him who was the real Head of our Humanity.

One hesitates to say that this Book is the product of nearly five-and-twenty years of feeling after the truth on these great subjects; for such a statement is not always taken as a recommendation; but it can be honestly said that it represents much hard labour and not a little dearly-bought experience, which last fact must be my apology for the personal element which enters unavoidably (though as little as possible) into the introductory chapter.

In many quarters of late, expression has been given to the need for a closer study and fresh presentation of the doctrines of the Holy Spirit and the Incarnation, and if the following pages may help, in ever so small a measure, towards that which is so greatly needed and desired, the writer of them would feel deeply grateful to Him whose guidance "into all the truth" he has fervently sought.

CONGREGATIONAL MANSE,  
LAURENCEKIRK, September 1899.

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# THE SPIRIT AND THE INCARNATION

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## INTRODUCTORY

THE following pages set forth the result of an inductive study of the Christian Scriptures, beginning with the most unquestioned, in order to ascertain what was the source of the power of Christianity as it went forth, a new religion, into the world, with the view of finding, ultimately, what is the truth concerning it and wherein resides its real power to-day.

Begun from a deep personal necessity, and in view of a special difficulty, it has led to a revived faith in the Evangelical doctrine concerning both the work and the Person of Christ as the God-man, and has issued in such a statement of the Christian verities as seems likely, from the writer's own experience of difficulties, to help faith therein.

The special difficulty referred to was one which has, doubtless, been felt by many minds, but which our common Theology has scarcely sufficiently recognised and met, and in consequence it is, more than anything else, the cause of departure from the Evangelical Faith. It is this: If God be our Heavenly Father, ever near us all and open of access to the greatest sinner who with contrite heart draws nigh, as Jesus undoubtedly taught, especially as He is reported in the first three Gospels, why should we need Jesus Himself as "the Mediator between God and man"? Ought we not

simply, in faith and penitence, to draw nigh to God as children who have sinned, but have returned to our Father, and, believing in our sonship, endeavour to realise it after the example of Jesus? Is not this what Jesus Himself asked us to do, and are we not, otherwise, putting Christ between us and God? Further, are we not thus led to set up an intricate system of dogmas, many of them hard of belief, instead of preaching to men the gospel that Jesus Himself preached of the Fatherhood of God, leading to the Sonship and Brotherhood of men? The difficulty here indicated is very much greater to some minds than most Evangelical Christians seem to realise, and makes it either extremely hard, or altogether impossible, for them to believe in the position assigned to Christ in Evangelical Theology. They are told, indeed, that Christ Himself *is* God, and so cannot stand between us *and* God; but new and very serious difficulties arise here. They are wholly unable to believe in a Tri-theistic or Di-theistic conception of God; they know there cannot be *two* Gods; and they are certain that in the Gospels—the fourth equally with the first three—Jesus always spoke of *the Father* as “the only God,” and if they are pointed to the Fourth Gospel as asserting an Eternal Divine Sonship for Christ, they cannot shut their eyes to the difficulties still surrounding that Gospel. They do not doubt Christ Himself, but they are compelled to doubt what seem to them opinions uncritically held concerning the origin and nature of the Fourth Gospel, or certain interpretations of its language. They are told that Jesus in that Gospel claimed to be God, and that, if He was not such, He was not even a good man. But it can be positively said on behalf of the majority of those referred to that, if they were certain Jesus made such a claim, they would reverently acknowledge it, however great the intellectual difficulty might seem, so profound is their confidence in Christ. But not only do they doubt the correctness of the

interpretation given to His words, they also know that the highest and most orthodox biblical scholarship is compelled to admit that there are so many open questions concerning the Fourth Gospel that we cannot be absolutely certain that we have, throughout, the actual words of Jesus Himself therein, uncoloured by ideas in the mind of the author or by a special mode of representation of the relation of Christ to God and man. Moreover, they see Christ in this Gospel also constantly affirming His own dependence on that Being whom He designates "the only true God." When, therefore, they ask in what sense Jesus Himself, who is confessedly man, can be rightly called God, their question ought to be met by a sympathy and a serious endeavour to answer it, such as it by no means always receives. It will not do to quote texts merely. Our whole attitude towards the Scriptures has been, indeed, gradually changing, so that, while they still remain the *norm* for all Christian doctrine, they cannot be indiscriminately held forth as final authority in the way they once were, with the expectation that men will at once bow to the letter.

At the same time, our views of God and the world and of the relation of God to the world have been, in like manner, changing. The atmosphere of our modern thought is no longer that which the first Christians breathed, nor even that in which our fathers thought out the great problems of Theology fifty years ago. Questions press in on us and difficulties arise which they did not feel. Science has created an almost entirely new world for us, and it is only gradually that we can come to move about with perfect freedom in this new world, and, perhaps, only after many a stumble and fall in the process of learning to walk.

When we think of the world as science has revealed it to us, and of God as, in the course of the conflict with unbelief, we have been led to think and speak of Him as a Divine Person (and as Christ Himself always spoke of

Him), it is no light question when it is asked, How can Christ be God ; or, How can one who pre-existed as a Divine Person be born on the earth and live and die as that true *man*, which we know He certainly was ? How can the miraculous entrance of such a Person into our Humanity fit into the conception which Science has given us of the mode of the world's creation and development ? If on the lines of development we seem able to come up to the divinely-filled Christ, what of His pre-existence ? and how are we able to see, at the same time, the actual entrance of a Divine Person into the world in Him ? And we *must*, if we are to hold fast to Evangelical Christianity, see in Christ such an entrance of the Divine into the human, we must see Him to be very God incarnate and yet true man. None of the substitutes for the old faith can permanently suffice us.

These and similar questions crave an answer, and cannot be rightfully hushed. Some would say, perhaps, that these questions cannot be answered. But they *must* be answered, unless we are condemned to live in a blind faith, with a constant suspicion, or fear, of a conflict with the rational mind within us. The history of Theology is really the record of the answer given to such questions by successive generations in the light of their own day, such as prevented a fatal breach between Faith and Reason, and we also must seek to answer them in the light that shines upon ourselves. An earnest *attempt*, at least, must be made to answer them for ourselves.

This the present writer found absolutely necessary in his own experience. After years of prayer and thought, he felt the only course open to him was to adopt the Christian-Theistic position, and, laying the whole stress on the reality of God as Father, while looking on Christ as the highest religious Teacher and the truest human Son of God, who proclaimed and revealed the Father and called

men to religion in its supreme and perfect form, in a sense, of course, an incarnation of God—to engage earnestly (as a Unitarian minister) in preaching the gospel of the Divine Fatherhood that Jesus preached, according to the first three Gospels. It seemed to him then that this “Christianity of Christ” and “Faith of Jesus” contained the essential gospel; that, as it was free from dogma, it was specially adapted to win those who are in the present age becoming alienated from Christianity; that it was in harmony with the truth-seeking spirit of progress, and with scientific thought; and that it was able to transform both the individual and the social life, so that the human Sonship and Brotherhood that are the corollaries of the Divine Fatherhood should be realised and the kingdom of God on the earth be advanced. No one could have taken up any gospel with deeper convictions or with greater earnestness.

The results, however, in the writer’s experience,—and he speaks only for himself,—after making due allowance for personal imperfections, were, in the main, extremely disappointing. This “simple gospel” was not, alas! received with the readiness with which he fondly believed it would be welcomed; and it seemed, with the truths that had been omitted, reduced too greatly to a gospel in word only and not in the power of God. Not only so, but that which seemed to begin in a simpler, more immediate faith in God as the Heavenly Father showed, too frequently, a tendency to end in the absence of all living faith in God; the gospel that was supposed to lead to a higher Christian life and to a richer fellowship with heavenly realities, too often but conducted to a bleak and cold wilderness of agnosticism whence no glimpse of a heavenly land could be desried. While, notwithstanding the earnest insistence on character and righteousness marking this form of faith, and in spite of many noble examples of a high moral and religious type, the loss in spirituality was assuredly not compensated for

by any *general* purer righteousness or higher morality: the morality of the average Evangelical Christian was at least as high. And, perhaps, saddest of all, in many cases, the moment those views were adopted by those outside such *indifference* seemed to set in, that it was not deemed necessary to make any open confession of them or any sacrifice on their account. It is true that similar reasoning might be employed against Evangelical Christianity because of the shortcomings of its professors; but this is not an argument against Unitarianism in itself, but only a statement of some of the reasons why the writer failed to find in it that *superiority* which he believed it to possess.

Something was wrong, therefore; some mistake had been made. There was nothing for it, however humbling, but to begin again, and by a fresh and determined study of the New Testament seek an understanding of the gospel of God in Jesus Christ, and, if possible, a solution of the difficulties referred to. Believing that the gospel, as it entered the world at first, proved itself to be, in some marvellous way, "the power of God unto salvation," the writer sought, in the first place, by an earnest study of the best authenticated Christian writings, to find in *what* that power resided. This ascertained, the endeavour was then made to *understand* it in relation to God and Christ, keeping ever the whole teaching of Christ in view. The ultimate result was, not only a removal of the difficulty with which he started, but such a view of the Person and work of Christ, as "the Wisdom and Power of God," as seemed "worthy of all acceptance" on the part, not only of the Heart, but of the Conscience, and of that Reason, which, although far from supreme as at any time developed in us, is still the faculty to which the Truth must appeal for complete and satisfying reception.

The writer has faithfully recorded the principles with which he set out in his investigation, determined to follow

Truth only, wherever it might lead, and keeping in view the knowledge which Science has brought us in these latter years concerning the world and man, as well as the most recent conclusions of Criticism and the most important utterances of biblical theologians of all schools of thought; and he can truthfully affirm that at the outset he never imagined he should be led back to that full Evangelical Faith in which he rejoices to-day. There was little difficulty in finding the answer to the primary question he set out to solve; but there was not a little in finding *what* the Holy Spirit really is in relation to God and to Christ. Belief in the personal presence of the living Christ was reached at an early stage as something inseparable from belief in the Holy Spirit in the Christian sense, but it seemed for long impossible to say in any true sense that Christ was *God*: He seemed, rather, simply the Person in whom God, in Himself the Unconditioned One, but who yet "works all in all," had conditioned His Being in human form and for our salvation—Christ being in this sense the unique "Son of God," but quite irrespective of the question of personal pre-existence; He was the ultimate product of all God's working in the world both in "nature" and in "grace." It was only very gradually, and through more than one tentative theory, that the writer was led to that belief in Christ as God in human form which is stated in the sequel. He was long unable to believe in any such real distinction in the Divine nature as could warrant the belief that Christ was, not only an incarnation of God, but God Himself incarnate. Still, this seemed necessary for the full Evangelical Faith in the work of Christ and in the place of Christ in relation to the Holy Spirit; the Spirit and the Incarnation were felt to hang together in such a way that full mental rest was impossible without the recognition of the presence and incarnation of God in Christ in an altogether unique sense. Two things chiefly helped him

at length to see how Christ could be true and genuine man and yet God Himself in human form. These were, first, a correct apprehension of the Christian doctrine of the "Trinity," especially with respect to the use of the word "person" therein; and secondly, that conception of the Incarnation as being at once the result of a long continued process—an eternal process, indeed—by which God was increasingly entering the world, and, at the same time, a real, new personal entrance of God into the world, which is fully set forth in the following pages. For long it seemed, in the light of the Fourth Gospel especially (of the apostolic source, at least, of which the writer, after careful study of the historical evidences for its reception in the Church, had become convinced), impossible to assert anything save a *subordinate*, Eternal, Divine Sonship of Christ. This had to be abandoned, however, as inconsistent with the unity of God and with the *full* Deity of Him who appeared in the flesh, as well as with His true humanity; and by an independent study of the whole question, in the light of Christ's personal teaching in the Gospels, the writer was led to a firm and intelligent faith in Jesus Christ as man, indeed, but, at the same time, as God Himself incarnate in that "person" or mode of the Godhead termed by Theology "the Son." He has endeavoured to give valid reasons for this belief, and to state the mode of the Incarnation in such a way as may be free from the difficulties many feel concerning it, and in harmony with the knowledge and thought of the present day; at the same time venturing to criticise some statements of theologians which create serious and needless hindrances to faith. He has allowed the progressive form the argument took, in the successive chapters of what may be termed the theological portion of the book, in some measure to remain, because it is possible that others may be helped on thus to the same ultimate conclusion. It is in the hope that the inquiry and study which

have proved so helpful in the writer's own experience, and which have brought new peace and strength to himself after many years of anxious seeking, with the determination to be satisfied with nothing but the truth, may aid others, that he is desirous to make their conclusions known. Gratefully conscious of the help he himself received, in his days of anxious seeking (which, painful as they were at times, he does not regret), from those who have given expression to their convictions on this highest of all subjects, he would fain be, in his turn, in some degree, a helper of others. Of one thing he feels certain—that if the conceptions of God and of the Person of Christ and of the Incarnation here presented had been set before his own mind twenty-five years ago, he would have been saved the long and trying journey in quest of the truth that he was compelled to enter on, and from ever turning aside from the Evangelical Faith.

It is also to be hoped that some service may be rendered to the Church at large, both by removing some difficulties that needlessly stand in the way of the Evangelical Faith, and by calling attention to that which is the great thing in Christianity, and the source of its real power to-day as truly as in the days of old.



PART I



BIBLICAL

I. THE QUESTION

II. THE EVIDENCE AND ANSWER



## CHAPTER I

### THE QUESTION

WE wish to know what Christianity really is, to discover what was the great, distinctive thing in it as it went forth as a religion into the world, to find out what it was that constituted it that new, saving, spiritual power which no one can doubt it proved itself to be. We do not seek, in the first place, at any rate, any *theories* concerning it, not even those of the first preachers of Christianity, but, primarily, the *facts* and the facts only. How are we to find them? The natural and only legitimate way, and that which we should take were we inquiring into any other similar subject,—into the nature of Buddhism as a promulgated religion, for example,—seems to be to go to and interrogate the Christian documents which record the preaching of the Christian apostles and the experience of Christian believers, beginning with the earliest and most certainly authentic of these writings, and from their materials to lay a firm foundation on which we may build higher as may seem desirable.

If we were seeking the facts of the life and teaching of Jesus we should begin with the *Gospels*, as has often been done by those who have sought to state the “essence of Christianity.” But this would not give us Christianity as it was actually preached to men and as it entered into and became a power in the world’s life. As such it was certainly not the mere re-proclamation of the faith of Jesus Himself, or the story of His life, or the repetition of His teachings. It was as “*a religion of Redemption*” it went

forth into the world, and what we seek to know is what made it such. For this we must turn, primarily, to the writings which record the preaching of the apostles, and which show us their *experience* and that of their converts. The question, In what does the power of a religion lie? can only be answered by an appeal to the facts of its promulgation in the world.

For these facts we might, indeed, turn to the New Testament writings as a whole; for, whatever questions may be raised respecting the dates and authorship of some of them, they all (with, possibly, one or two exceptions) represent what has been called "the earliest Christian belief," and show us wherein the power of the Christian religion was believed to reside by those who actually experienced it. The more widely separated they are in time, within this period, and the more diverse their origin and authorship, the weightier will their combined testimony be, from our present point of view, should it be found coincident; while, of course, where matters of historical fact are concerned, regard must be had to the questions that are raised by criticism; and, where we meet with *formulated* doctrines, questions of date and origin cannot be ignored. While, however, we can thus apply to the entire New Testament, we desire to build on as firm a foundation as we can find, and shall therefore begin with and rest primarily on the earliest and most indisputable Christian writings. These do not happen to be the historical books —none of the Gospels being placed, in its present form at least, even by conservative critics, much before A.D. 70, while the date and authorship of the Fourth Gospel and Book of Acts have long been subjects of keen controversy. The earliest New Testament writings are (with, perhaps, the exception of 1st Thessalonians) the practically undisputed Epistles of Paul, namely, those to the Galatians, the Romans, and the Corinthians, which are also most

directly concerned with the preaching and establishment of Christianity in the world. The genuineness of these is admitted almost on all hands, and their date generally placed somewhere between A.D. 55–59. The importance of these for our present purpose cannot be overrated. They were written within from twenty to thirty years after Christ's departure from this world of the seen and temporal, by one whose experience dates from the earliest days of the gospel, and who was himself its most notable convert and chief preacher in the world. They deal directly, moreover, with the things that belong to Christian experience. We shall, therefore, go to these first and found upon them. After these, we shall take the Gospels, which, although of later date as they stand, represent very early Christian beliefs, using the Fourth Gospel—which is now, in opposition to the tendency prevailing a few years ago among critical writers to reject it as wholly unhistorical, increasingly recognised as representing an aspect of the Christian tradition that cannot be ignored—only as far as we believe we may legitimately use it. Then (without passing any opinion on critical questions) we shall look at the later Epistles ascribed to Paul, and at the remaining New Testament writings.

Our method will be strictly interrogatory and inductive. We have really no theory to bring to these writings to be supported, as so many theories *can* find support from them. Our position is that of one with whom theories have failed, and who therefore feels compelled anew to seek the truth itself. It is the facts and the facts only we shall seek in the first instance, whatever we may be afterwards driven to reach after, for the explanation of the facts. But, certainly, till we find the facts we shall form no theory. Our aim is, in the first place, simply to find from the earliest and most genuine records of Christian teaching and experience in what the real power of Christianity consisted, as it entered the world as a religion.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EVIDENCE AND ANSWER

#### I. THE UNDISPUTED EPISTLES OF PAUL

##### 1. *Galatians*

WE begin with the Epistle to the Galatians, which is admitted on all hands to be a genuine production of the Apostle Paul, and in which he deals expressly with what was distinctive in Christianity, in relation, at least, to Judaism.

In the fourth chapter we have a clear statement of the new thing in Christianity (Gal. iv. 4-7) (we quote from the Revised Version): “But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Earlier, in the same Epistle (iii. 14), he had stated the object of “redemption from the law” to be, “that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

“THE SPIRIT,” therefore,—that Spirit described as “the Spirit of God’s Son in our hearts,”—this was the promised and long-looked-for blessing coming through the seed of Abraham to “all nations,” realised at last through Jesus Christ.

In the opening of the third chapter (iii. 2-6) he

speaks of this “Spirit” as something very real amongst them:—“This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing (or message) of faith?—having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?—He that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles (or powers) among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” There was a new Divine Spirit, therefore, poured out on them which made its real presence manifest even by outward signs. Yet in its essence it was *moral*; for it was the principle and power of the Christian life. In the hortatory portions of the Epistle the whole stress is laid on the possession and influence of this Spirit: “We through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness” (v. 5). “Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh—For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;—But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (v. 16–18). “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace”—all the qualities of the Christian life (v. 22). The Spirit was the power of that life within them: “If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk” (v. 25). It was the power of the Life Eternal: “he that soweth unto the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap eternal life” (vi. 8).

In this Epistle, therefore, “*the Spirit*,” whatever it may mean, was the great thing in Christianity; that in which the original promise of God was fulfilled; in which the work of Christ culminated; and in the power of which the spiritual and eternal life of man as a son of God was secured. It made itself also so manifest amongst them, as something new, coming to them through the gospel, that Paul could point to its presence and working as an indisputable proof of the validity of his apostleship and of the truth of his gospel in the face of those who questioned both.

*2. Romans*

Turning next to the Epistle to the Romans, in which, as is generally believed, Paul's teaching is more fully developed, we find its theme to be "the Gospel of Jesus Christ," which is "*the power of God* unto salvation, to everyone that believeth" (Rom. i. 16). And, having first shown the necessity there was for the opening up of a new way of free justification, or acceptance with God, for all men—Jew and Gentile alike—the apostle proceeds to speak of the blessed fruits of that justification in experience—of the confidence and good hope we may have toward God—the ground or guarantee of which is the fact that "the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given unto us" (v. 5). Justification, however, is but the prelude to *salvation*, which depends not on the death of Christ, but on His continued *life*. "If," he says, Christ died for us that we might be "justified by (or in) His blood," much more shall we be "saved from the wrath (of God to fall on the ungodly) through Him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by (or in) His life" (v. 9, 10).

But it is in the sixth chapter, in answer to the objection that might be urged from the way in which he had magnified the grace of God, saying that sin had only caused it to abound the more,—"*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*"—the truth as to the power of God unto salvation fully opens on us. What he says in this chapter may be summed up in the statement, that in Christ we were represented as dying unto sin and rising into a new life of righteousness; believers share both in the death and in the resurrection life of Christ, being

united with Him through His indwelling Spirit. As more fully expounded in the seventh and eighth chapters, they were "made dead to the law (and to all else) through the body of Christ, that ye should be joined to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God—that we might serve in newness of the Spirit, not in oldness of the letter" (vii. 4–6). This, of course, refers primarily to the Jewish law, but it holds equally good for all mere law, however revealed to us. It is because we are no more under "law" (merely), but under "grace," that we have power to live to God (vi. 14). Grace brings us the effectual help of God through the Spirit. The law was holy and just and good, but man was "carnal"—under the dominance of "the flesh," and, therefore, the law, while it demanded righteousness, was powerless to effectuate it. Rightly apprehended, it only made men feel their *want* of righteousness, and brought, not life, but condemnation (vii. 7–25). But to those who were "in Christ Jesus," the righteousness which the law aimed at had come, and the condemnation had passed away. How was this? Here is the answer on which everything turns: "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death*" (viii. 2)—"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,"—this was the saving power. All that the apostle has previously said has been leading up to what he says in this eighth chapter. Here it is manifestly "the Spirit" that is the great thing in Christianity—that in which its saving power consists—"the Spirit" in contrast with "the flesh" merely. The law could not free men from the sin that had its seat in the flesh; but "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance (or requirement) of the law might be fulfilled *in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (viii. 3, 4). The Spirit is thus the

essential thing, and is the power of that new life which issues in salvation. It is a new influence that comes to men through grace, being at once its gift and its instrument. Henceforth *everything* depends on the possession and cherishing of this Spirit. Men may be "after the flesh" or "after the Spirit." It is this that makes the great distinction amongst men; for "they that are in the flesh (merely) cannot please God" (viii. 8). The importance of justification is that it leads to the possession of the Spirit of God, apart from which it could do us no good. Those in whom that Spirit dwelt were not "in the flesh," but "in the Spirit," "if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (viii. 9); and, "if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (viii. 10). Henceforth our supreme obligation is to live to this Spirit: otherwise we "must die"; only by loyalty to the Spirit can we "live" (viii. 12, 13). "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (viii. 14). This Spirit is not something in men "by nature"; but something coming to them through "grace" or "through faith," belonging only to those who are "in Christ," and distinguishing them as such. It is the Spirit of God—"the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead" (viii. 9, 11); but it is also "the Spirit of Christ"—nay, it is Christ Himself in them (viii. 10). As in Galatians, it is "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (viii. 15). It is not only the power of the spiritual life here, but of the life to come: "He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (viii. 11). So far from being our own spirit merely, or something belonging to us "by nature" or "according to the flesh," it is so distinct from our own spirit that it "bears witness with (or, perhaps, to) our spirit that we are the children of God" (viii. 16). In prayer it "helps our infirmity"—"the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings

which cannot be uttered," but which were known to Him who searched the heart and knew "the mind of the Spirit," whose pleadings were all (also) according to the Divine will and purpose (viii. 26-28). Thus the Spirit, while *in* us, is not *of* us, but is something new coming to us through Christ in the gospel, so truly new that its "first-fruits" were produced in those who believed in Christ (viii. 23).

So, when the apostle passes to another branch of his subject, it is with the earnest asseveration that he spoke the truth in Christ, his conscience bearing witness with him "in the Holy Spirit" (ix. 1), which was manifestly a real Presence in his consciousness. "The kingdom of God," he says again, is—"righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (xiv. 17). He prays that they may "abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (xv. 13). And he speaks of the "signs and wonders" which Christ wrought through him for the obedience of the Gentiles (whose offering up was "sanctified through the Holy Spirit"), "in the power of the Holy Spirit (or Spirit of God)" (xv. 18, 19).

Thus we have again, in Romans as in Galatians, "the Spirit" as the new Divine Power that wrought in men unto their conversion, making them the sons of God, and that dwelt in them unto their eternal salvation. Everything here again leads up to "*the Spirit*."

### 3. I Corinthians

We come now to the Epistles to the Corinthians.

In the first of these, as in the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle speaks of a special Divine power as belonging to the gospel. His speech and his preaching were not "in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," that their faith "should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (I Cor. ii. 4, 5). God had revealed to them the things of a higher

wisdom "through the Spirit; for (he says) the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God" (ii. 10, 11). They had received "not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God" (ii. 12). This Spirit gave them even the words in which to speak (ii. 13); but the things of that Spirit of God the natural (merely psychical) man could not receive; "for they are foolishness unto him," and must be "spiritually judged (or discerned)" (ii. 14, 15). That Spirit was the portion of all believers. "Know ye not," he asks, "that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (iii. 16). And again: "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which ye have from God" (vi. 19).

In the twelfth chapter he speaks specially of "spiritual gifts." The Holy Spirit itself was the great gift that came to all who confessed Jesus as Lord: "No man can say that Jesus is Lord but in the Holy Spirit" (xii. 3). But there were diversities of "gifts" (charisms), "ministrations," and "workings" proceeding from "the same Spirit"—ultimately from God Himself, "who worketh all things in all" (xii. 4-6). Through, or in, that Spirit were given "the word of wisdom," "the word of knowledge," "faith," "gifts of healings," "workings of miracles" (or "powers"), "prophecy," "discerning of spirits," "divers kinds of tongues," "interpretation of tongues": "all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will" (xii. 7-11). All these gifts were given "to profit withal"; but, while the greater gifts were to be earnestly desired, the greatest of all was *Love* (chap. xiii.). These various gifts belonged to them as "members of Christ," in

whom they were "one Body," into which they had all been "baptized in one Spirit," and "all made to drink of one Spirit" (xii. 12, 13). Since they were the Body of Christ, it is implied that it was His Spirit that animated and inspired them; and in the fifteenth chapter it is expressly said of Christ, as "the last Adam," that He had become a "life-giving" (or quickening) "Spirit" (xv. 46). Here, once more, it is clear from all the foregoing that "the Spirit" was the great gift and power of God in Christianity.

#### 4. *2 Corinthians*

In the Second Epistle we have the same teaching, in some respects still more full and explicit. "Now He that establisheth us with you in (or into) Christ, and anointed us is God; who also (or seeing that He both) sealed us and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. i. 21, 22). His readers were "an Epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables (that are) hearts of flesh" (iii. 3). His sufficiency was from God, who had made him sufficient as the minister of a new covenant, "not of the letter, but of the Spirit," which "giveth life" (iii. 6). The new dispensation is distinctively "the ministration of the Spirit" (iii. 8). The treasure committed to them was as in earthen vessels, "that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves" (iv. 7). The Holy Spirit is spoken of as a constant element in the life of the apostles (vi. 6). It is also "the earnest" of the future life (v. 5). Its coming constituted a new era, in which the old things had passed away, and a new spiritual creation had arisen (v. 16, 17). Again he reminds his readers that they were "a temple of the living God, even as God said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (vi.

16–18). As in the First Epistle, he speaks of the last Adam as having become a “quicken<sup>g</sup> Spirit,” so here, where he speaks of the new Dispensation of the Spirit, he says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (iii. 17). And again: “We all with open face beholding (or reflecting) as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit” (or the Spirit which is the Lord) (iii. 18). And in the concluding benediction, “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” are combined as a unity of gracious influence: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (xiii. 14).

### SUMMARY

The conclusion we are led to, therefore, from these undisputed Epistles of Paul is, that the great distinctive thing in Christianity is the gift of the Holy Spirit to men—that which is spoken of sometimes as “the Spirit of God,” and sometimes as “the Spirit of Christ,” or as “the Spirit” simply. This is the fulfilment of the great Divine promise and purpose; in this resides the power of salvation, and everything in the appearing and work of Christ leads up to and culminates in this Divine gift. Whatever “the Spirit” may mean, it is clear that we are to find in it the distinguishing feature and the source of power in the Christian religion.

### II. THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

Let us turn next to the historical books of the New Testament. Questions of authorship, date, and differences of structure need not concern us at present. Although later than Paul’s undoubted Epistles, and less clear in their

origin, all the Gospels (and even the Book of Acts) will be acknowledged to reflect shades of what has been called "the earliest Christian belief," and the longer the period of time over which their publication was spread (within certain limits), the wider the localities, and the more diverse the types of thought they represent, the more interest and, in one sense, the greater value will belong to their witness to early Christian experience and belief concerning the object of Christ's appearance and the end of that marvellous life and work which they record.

### 1. *The Gospels*

The confirmation which all these Gospels give to the teaching of the undisputed Epistles of Paul is nothing short of surprising on the part of historical records; and whatever differences may seem to separate the Fourth Gospel from the first three, they all agree in stating plainly that the specific end of the mission of Christ was to "*baptize men with (or in) the Holy Spirit.*"

In Mark's Gospel (i. 8) this ministry of Christ is thus contrasted with that of John the Baptist: "John preached saying—I baptized you with (or in) water; but He shall baptize you with (or in) the Holy Spirit." Matthew (iii. 11) and Luke (iii. 16) give the same report, adding "and fire." In John (i. 33, 34) we have the same thing stated with greater amplitude: "but He that sent me to baptize with (or in) water, He said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon Him, the same is He that baptizeth with (or in) the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." Manifestly this is what "the Christ, the Son of God, was to do," and it was to prove that Jesus was this Christ that this Gospel was written (xx. 31).

All the Gospels represent Jesus as having been Himself

anointed (Christed) and endowed for His life-work with the Holy Spirit at His baptism. John (according to the general understanding of the passage) says that "the Spirit was given to Him without measure" (iii. 34). Luke speaks of Him as being "full of the Spirit" (iv. 1). The first three evangelists represent Him as being "led by (or in) the Spirit" (Mark says "driven") into the wilderness to undergo His preliminary testing (Matt. iv. 1; Mark i. 12; Luke iv. 2). Luke (iv. 14) says He "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," and began His preaching there by applying to Himself the prophecy, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor," etc. (iv. 17, 18).

According to the first and third Gospels, He was not only specially endowed with the Holy Spirit, but was even physically the product of that Spirit, born of the Spirit (Matt. i. 18, 20; Luke i. 35); while, according to the Fourth Gospel (after a different mode of apprehending the Divine agency in the world), in Him the Logos or Word of God became flesh (John i. 14).

It was "by (or in) the Spirit of God" Jesus Himself said He cast out demons and performed His mighty works, and in this, He declared, lay the proof that the kingdom of God had come in power to men (Matt. xii. 28; Luke xi. 20). Therefore, while anything said against Himself as the Son of Man should be forgiven, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit had no forgiveness (Matt. xii. 31, 32; Mark iii. 28, 29; Luke xii. 10). According to the Fourth Gospel, it was "the Father dwelling in Him" (by His Spirit, according to the representations of the earlier portions of the body of this Gospel) who was the power by which He spake and wrought (John xiv. 10).

Both in the Synoptists and in the Fourth Gospel, the culminating gift of Christ to His disciples is the Holy Spirit. "Behold," we read in Luke (xxiv. 49), "I send the

promise of My Father upon you" (as we have seen it also so described by Paul in Galatians (iii. 14)): "but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." In the Fourth Gospel (John xx. 22) "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit." In this Gospel, indeed, the coming of the Spirit holds a specially prominent place. The subject is greatly amplified and emphasised, and is intimately associated with His own coming again in Spirit and with the coming of the Father Himself to the disciples. We all know in what tender words Jesus promises those whom He was about to leave, outwardly at least, another Comforter (Paraclete or Advocate and Strengthener) from the Father, to be with them for ever, "even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: ye know Him, for He abideth with you, and shall be in you" (xiv. 16, 17); "the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name" (xiv. 26); and it was in order that the Spirit might come that He was about to leave them in bodily form (xvi. 7). Through that Spirit which He, going to the Father, should send them, they should do even greater works than they had seen Himself do, "because," He said, "I go unto the Father" (xiv. 12), and, it is implied, sent them the fulness of that Spirit through which He Himself wrought. It is in this Gospel, too, we have the need for the new birth of the Spirit so strongly asserted, with the explanation, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (iii. 6). We have here also the repeated statement that Christ Himself is the Light and Life of men, apart from eating whose flesh and drinking His blood we have no life in us—no true present or eternal life—which, it is explained, was to be understood of the Spirit and not of the mere outward flesh (vi. 53, 63). In this Gospel we have also the remarkable statement, in connection with what Jesus said concerning the effects of

believing on Him : “ But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet (given?); because Jesus was not yet glorified ” (vii. 39).

The Gospels are thus in complete agreement with what we have seen in the undoubted Epistles of Paul, and whatever differences there may be between the first three Gospels and the Fourth, it is specially noteworthy that all agree in representing the great end of Christ’s appearance and work to be to baptize men with that Holy Spirit, the fulness of which dwelt in Himself. It was manifestly *this* that made Jesus, in their view, “ the Christ of God.”

## 2. *Acts*

It may be truly said that the Book of Acts is one continuous testimony to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. It brings before us the disciples waiting “ for the promise of the Father,” according to the word of Jesus that they should be “ baptized with (or in) the Holy Spirit not many days hence ”; and it describes the actual coming of that Spirit in fulfilment of the promises of Christ and of the Old Testament prophets, the power to send forth which it represents as the crowning gift the crucified and risen Lord had received of the Father (i. 4, 5, ii. 1–4, 32–36). It was just this that constituted Him the Christ (i. 36); and, thenceforth, He was in that Spirit present in His Church, guiding and ruling over it, and working towards the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth ; so that the book might be well called, not the Acts of the Apostles, but the Acts of Christ Himself through the Spirit. The first coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and its special outpouring on other occasions are described in a most realistic manner ; but less is said of its *ethical* qualities than in the Epistles of Paul. As, however, serious questions are

asked concerning the authorship and motive of this book, and as obvious difficulties arise in relation to the *form* of its representations (an instance of which obtrudes itself upon us at the outset, in what would otherwise be an extremely important narrative, in the different idea the writer *seems* to have had of the nature of "the gift of tongues" from that which we derive from Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians), we will not follow out the narrative in detail, nor adduce it further than as it witnesses to early Christian belief in the *fact* of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit as that which actually succeeded Christ in the flesh, that in which His work culminated, and through which it is continued. Fuller testimony to this it would not be possible to have than that which is contained in the Acts of the Apostles.

### III. THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

These are all in entire agreement with what we have already seen. But, having obtained evidence so full and clear from the unquestioned writings of Paul and from the historical books of the New Testament, considered solely as witnesses to the earliest Christian belief, we shall give a mere summary of that contained in the other New Testament writings, taking them in the generally accepted order, and beginning with those ascribed to Paul.

In Paul's First Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, which is perhaps the oldest Christian writing we possess, he reminds his readers of how the gospel came to them, "not in word only but in power and in the Holy Spirit" (i. 5); and of how they received the word with "joy of the Holy Spirit" (i. 6). God is described as "He who giveth His Holy Spirit unto you" (iv. 8), and they are earnestly enjoined not to "quench" that Spirit (v. 20).

In *Philippians*, which is generally regarded, even by negative critics, as at least truly representing the thought of Paul in its later stage, he speaks of the ground of his confidence and hope as being based on "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (i. 19); of "the fellowship of the Spirit" (ii. 1); and he describes the true Israel as those who "worship by the Spirit of God" (iii. 3).

In both *Colossians* and *Ephesians* we have, certainly, what seems more of a theological element; but both Epistles are undoubtedly witnesses to Christian belief and experience at an early period, which is all we are concerned with at present; and the most unsparing critics regard either one or both as most probably founded, at least, on an Epistle written by Paul.

In *Colossians*, although "love in the Spirit" is mentioned (i. 8), *Christ*, rather than "the Spirit," is made the immediate Agent of the Divine life in the souls of believers, while God Himself is its source. In *Christ* "all the fulness of the Godhead dwells," and believers are "in Him made full" (ii. 10). He is "the Head of the Body, the Church" (i. 18); "from whom all the Body—increaseth with the increase of God" (ii. 19). "Christ," in short, "is all and *in* all" (iii. 11).

In *Ephesians* greater prominence is given to "the Spirit" as such, which is "the Holy Spirit of promise" and "an earnest of our inheritance," wherewith we are "sealed" by God (i. 13, 14). God could give "a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ" (i. 17). Through Him, both Jew and Gentile had "access in one Spirit unto the Father" (ii. 18), and in Him they were "builded together (or unto) a habitation of God in the Spirit" (ii. 22). It was "in the Spirit" the mystery of the gospel had been revealed (iii. 6); it was "through the

Spirit" (God's Spirit) believers could be "strengthened in the inward man," so that "Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith," and they might be "filled unto all the fulness of God" (iii. 14-19). The Spirit was the power by which "God worketh in us," He who was "able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (iii. 21). He beseeches them to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"; for there is "one Body and one Spirit—one Lord, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (iv. 1-6). "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," he pleads, "in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption" (iv. 30). He bids them "be filled with the Spirit" (or in Spirit) (v. 18); wield "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (vi. 17); and "pray at all seasons in the Spirit" (vi. 18). As in Acts, the Spirit is the great gift of that Christ who had ascended to the Father and "received gifts for men" (iv. 7, 8); and, while everything is traced back to God, and the Spirit is said to be His, it is *through Christ* that the Divine presence and power are working in the Church, which is really the Body of which Christ is the inspiring and sustaining Spirit of life (iv. 4-16). In its doctrine of the Spirit this Epistle is certainly Pauline.

Coming next to the *Pastoral Epistles* (1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus), although the Pauline authorship of these is strongly disputed, they contain valuable material showing the early Christian faith. Their representations agree, in general, with those in Acts.

In them we hear of "the *gift* that was in Timothy through laying on of hands" (1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6); of "the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. i. 14); of "the Spirit" speaking of the things that should happen in the Church (1 Tim. iv. 1); and of salvation "through

renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He (God) poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Tit. iii. 6, 7).

The *remaining writings* of the New Testament, whether Pauline, Petrine, or Johannean, all bear witness to the same truth.

In *Hebrews* we are told how the gospel came in the power of the Holy Spirit, "God bearing witness both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers and by gifts (distributions) of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will" (ii. 4). Believers had been "made partakers of the Holy Spirit—and the powers of the age to come (the Messianic age)" (vi. 5). Christ "through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God" to cleanse away sin and bring about the fulfilment of that new covenant which ensured not only forgiveness, but God's presence and power with and in His people (ix. 14, 15, viii. 8–12).

*James* speaks of "the Spirit which He (God) made to dwell in us" (iv. 5), and says that "He giveth more (or greater) grace," to help us against the evil that is in ourselves (iv. 6, 7).

In the First Epistle of *Peter* it is declared that the gospel preached had been "in the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven" (i. 12), and that "(the Spirit) of glory and the Spirit of God" rested on them (iv. 14). They were to sanctify in their hearts "Christ as Lord," who had been "put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit; in which He also went and preached to the spirits in prison" (iii. 15, 18, 19). The Spirit that moved in the prophets is also spoken of as "the Spirit of Christ which was in them" (i. 11).

*Jude* refers to some “who are sensual (psychical), having not the Spirit” (ver. 19), and exhorts to “pray in the Holy Spirit” (ver. 20).

In the *Revelation* (which is “the Revelation of Jesus Christ” (i. 1)) we read that John, the writer, was “*in the Spirit* on the Lord’s day” (i. 10, iv. 2). He records the messages *of the Spirit* (ii. 7, etc.) to the Churches, given as from the glorified Christ, “the living one,” “who was dead and is alive for evermore” (i. 18); who stood at the door and knocked, ready, if any man would hear His voice and open the door, to “come in and sup with him” in the fellowship of love (iii. 20). In the closing invitation, “the Spirit and the Bride say, Come” (xxii. 17). We read frequently also of “the seven Spirits which are before the throne,” or “the seven Spirits of God,” or “the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” (i. 4, iii. 1, iv. 5, v. 6).

In the *Johannean* writings we have, all acknowledge, a distinct type of teaching which it will be interesting to compare with the other types.

The *Gospel* has already been before us. The *First Epistle* speaks of “the life, the eternal *life*, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us,” and of the “fellowship (or communion) with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” which is ours, “if we walk in the light as He is in the light” (i. 2, 3-7), which light has come and shone on us in and through Jesus Christ (ii. 8). Christians are said to “know” Christ and to be “in” Him (ii. 4, 6). *The Spirit* has been given us, and it is by this we know the “abiding” (or dwelling) in us of Christ, or of God—“by the Spirit which He gave us” (iii. 24). They had an “anointing from the Holy One and knew all things” (or “all knew”) (ii. 20); which anointing,

received of Him, remained in them, so that they needed not any one to teach them; but "His anointing taught them concerning all things, and was true, and no lie" (ii. 27). Here we have the Spirit as an abiding Presence in believers. Emphasis is laid on the *moral* qualities of the Spirit as well as on its truth: "No man hath beheld God at any time"; but, "if we love one another, God abideth (or dwelleth) in us"; and "hereby know we that we abide (or dwell) in Him and He in us, because *He hath given us of His Spirit*" (iv. 13, 14). He speaks as if there were other spirits influencing men: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ is not of God; and this is the (spirit) of the Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh, and now is in the world already" (iv. 1-4). The Spirit of God was, therefore, the Spirit of Christ as opposed to the spirit of Antichrist. It is further described as "the Spirit of Truth" as opposed to "the spirit of error" (iv. 6); nay, it is said of the Spirit that bears witness to Christ that "the Spirit *is* the Truth" (v. 7).

#### IV. CONCLUSION: THE ANSWER

We thus find that the whole New Testament is one and clear in its teaching concerning the new and vital element in Christianity. Its power lay in "the Spirit" which through Christ went forth into the world and made its abode in the hearts of believers. Whatever it may mean, Christianity is distinctively "the Dispensation of the Spirit"—the entrance into the world, through Jesus Christ, of a new principle and power of spiritual light and life called "the Holy Spirit," "the Spirit of God," and "the

Spirit of Christ." The coming of this Spirit was the great object of previous divinely-inspired hope and expectation—the great "promise of the Father," the fulfilment of which through Christ proved Him to be indeed that Messiah who should "baptize men with (or in) the Holy Spirit." This Spirit was not only the source of new and peculiar powers, but was the source and power in believers of the life of the sons of God, and of the life everlasting. It was the Spirit of adoption, in which men had access to the Father and truly worshipped God; it was the Spirit of revelation and knowledge, of wisdom and power in the service of God; it was in that Spirit the gospel came with convincing and saving power to men's hearts; and, when received, it was the presence and power of God and of Christ within men. If any man had not that Spirit of Christ, it was a proof that he was "none of His." "The Spirit" is not merely one element amongst others; it is that toward which everything else leads up. It was, as already said, "the promise" the fulfilment of which made Jesus the true Christ; and not only all God's previous working, but all that was done through Christ in the flesh, culminated in this abiding gift of the Holy Spirit.



PART II



EXPLANATORY



## CHAPTER I

### WHAT IS “THE SPIRIT”?

#### NEED FOR THE QUESTION—DISTINCTION BETWEEN ITS “ORDINARY” AND “EXTRAORDINARY” EFFECTS

THE conclusion we have reached—that the gift of the Holy Spirit to men is that which distinguishes Christianity, and that it is in this its Divine and saving power resides—is not a new one: it has been expressed for centuries in the familiar phrase “the Dispensation of the Spirit”; yet it may come with fresh force to some minds, and we have still to seek an understanding of it. Our first feeling may be that, since “the Spirit” is the essential thing, Christianity is not a system of doctrine, but something higher and more immediately Divine, and we may be tempted to regard doctrine as comparatively unimportant. Doctrine can only, indeed, be important as it is related to the Spirit; but two questions immediately arise—What *is* this Holy Spirit? and, How are we to become recipients of it?

Although the power of the Spirit was felt and its reality fully recognised from the first in the Christian Church, it was long before any definite doctrine was formulated concerning it. While the Person of Christ had been keenly discussed, and His relation to God carefully stated in the Nicene Creed, the Holy Spirit was in that manifesto simply recognised as existing. While some had

used mainly scriptural language respecting the Spirit, by others He had been identified with the "Wisdom" of the Old Testament, and even confounded with the Logos; by others the Spirit had been regarded as a creature or as a power or gift of God. Even as late as A.D. 380, Gregory Nazianzen could say, "Some of our theologians regard the Spirit simply as a mode of Divine operation, others as a creature of God, others as God Himself; others, again, say that they know not which of these opinions to accept, from their reverence for Holy Writ, which says nothing upon it."<sup>1</sup> Others, however, had approximated to the doctrine of the Deity of the Spirit (although in general He was regarded as subordinate to the Father and the Son); and Athanasius, in particular, had argued that, since the Holy Spirit is the source of the true life, and since it is by the impartation of Him we attain to communion with God, He must be regarded as partaking of the Divine essence. This became in time the standard doctrine of the Church, and the place of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, along with the Father and the Son, was affirmed by the Council of Illyria, A.D. 375, and by the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381. This Council of Constantinople homologated a creed presented to it in which the faith in the Holy Spirit was expressed as follows: "And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Life-Giver, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake through the prophets." That the Spirit proceeded from the Son as well as from the Father was formally added to the creed, in opposition to Arianism, at the third Council of Toledo, A.D. 589. The discussion concerning the Spirit was very limited. As has been well said: "The ancient Fathers found a difficulty in defining the work and office of the Holy Spirit, partly because

<sup>1</sup> Neander's *History of Dogmas*, vol. i. p. 304. See also Basil on *The Holy Spirit*, circ. A.D. 374.

they were preoccupied with the office and work of the Son of God, partly because the work of the Spirit could not be understood till after many generations had devoted themselves to the study of the life within the soul. . . . Slowly and painfully and by the bitter experience of life, struggling with the eternal mystery, has the Spirit of God been fulfilling the promise of the departing Christ"—to guide His disciples into all the truth.<sup>1</sup>

Although the doctrine thus expressed in the creeds has ever since been the accepted doctrine, ideas concerning the Spirit have remained extremely vague and indefinite. Formally, the Spirit is confessed as "the third Person in the blessed Trinity," but how much real meaning does this convey to the average mind? We hear it constantly said that the Holy Spirit is the great want of the Church, and men are exhorted to pray for the Spirit above all else. They *do* pray for it, and yet it does not seem to come in answer to their prayers. Its guidance is continually evoked for all Church-action by Pope and Protestant alike; all Churches, sects, and parties claim to be under its direction; while yet they may be, in the most important respects, in complete antagonism to each other. Men have not seldom sought the Spirit's inspiration and guidance, while yet they have pursued a course diametrically opposed to all that is of God, as, for example, in the dark Councils of the Inquisition, which were always opened by solemn prayer for the Holy Spirit. Others have been carried away by wild enthusiasms, like the Founders of the Kingdom of God in Münster. Some seek the Spirit as if He were a semi-physical Being, and some look for His agency through a mechanical ritualism. Others, again, by no means to be classed among orthodox believers (like the authoress of *Robert Elsmere* and the late Mr. Matthew Arnold himself), assure us that the Spirit is the great

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 347.

thing in Christianity; but they leave us in doubt as to *what* the Spirit really is, and as to *how* we can come to be possessed by it. This is the defect also of such an able and fine toned work as Principal Drummond's "*Via, Veritas, Vita*," or "*Christianity in its most Simple and Intelligible Form*," in which he says: "Whatever may be its source, whatever its channel of communication, whatever the implicit thought on which it rests, whatever the duties or the worship which it requires, I regard the presence of this mighty and transforming Spirit as the fundamental and permanent fact in Christianity" (pp. 8, 9). Surely, if the Spirit be, as it certainly is, the great, distinctive, permanent and saving power in Christianity, it is the great want of us all to-day; and, if so, how necessary is it to inquire, *What* this Spirit really is? *How* does it come to us? What is its nature? How can we come under its inspiration and be made partakers of the fulness of its power? The want of a clear conception of what the Holy Spirit really means is one of the chief hindrances to the realisation of its presence and power in our life and work, and the principal cause of the errors that men have fallen into and still fall into concerning it. These questions we must therefore attempt to answer by (in the first place) a direct reference to those scriptures which speak of the Spirit, and quite independently of the formal, and often barren, statements of the creeds; our sole desire being to get at the vital truths.

It must be said that it is by no means easy to find a satisfying answer to our questions: rather have we found it extremely difficult. The mode in which the Spirit is spoken of in the New Testament, although, doubtless, practically plain and satisfying to its writers and first readers, is perplexing to us. It is spoken of sometimes as "the Spirit" simply or "the Holy Spirit"; sometimes as "the Spirit of God"; at other times as "the Spirit of

Christ," while its operations appear to be regarded, now, as those of God acting directly, and, again, as those of Christ, who seems sometimes to be identified with the Spirit; while yet the Spirit seems to be regarded as if it had a distinct personality of its own—"the Holy Spirit that searches all things, even the deep things of God." These varied representations may, indeed, be summed up and harmonised in that which was the fundamental Christian conception, namely, that to the exalted Christ, the glorified Messiah, God had given that which was the great Messianic promise, the Holy Spirit, wherewith He should baptize men and establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. While all was *of* God, all was *through* Christ, and all was *by* or *in* the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> This, however, while it harmonises the various modes of apostolic representation, does not tell us *what* the Holy Spirit is in itself.

The difficulty is increased by the fact that the Holy Spirit appears in general in the New Testament to be regarded as a *new* gift, distinctive of Christianity, while yet its presence and operations are very fully recognised in the Old Testament. In what sense was it *new*?

And, once more, the subject is further complicated by what is said concerning the "coming" of the Spirit and the physical manifestations which attended its presence in the earliest days of Christianity. Were these the veritable manifestations of an external power that "came" on men? If so, what was that power? why have these manifestations ceased? and what is the difference between the Spirit in those transitory manifestations and in its abiding reality? The inquiry is thus a very difficult and complicated one. In the endeavour to work our way towards an answer, let us take the last-mentioned question first.

<sup>1</sup> It was so summed up by Origen in the third century.

*Distinction between the outward and the ethical work  
of the Spirit*

We must at the outset draw the old and well-known distinction, which most recent writers (such as Pfleiderer, Harnack, and Bruce) accentuate, between the outward and miraculous effects of the Spirit and its inward, ethical, and abiding operations.<sup>1</sup> It has been said frequently of late, that to Paul belongs the high distinction of carrying the Christian Church over from a merely external and miraculous conception of the Messianic Spirit to an inward and ethical one. And certainly, as far as the evidence goes, the external, intellectual, and even physical effects of the Spirit preponderate in the Book of Acts and in the first three Gospels, and Paul's own writings show that many in the first Churches were more impressed by its outward manifestations, than by its inner, moral, and spiritual qualities. These last Paul not only exalted, but set forth as its real and essential qualities. With Paul, the Spirit is essentially that of the new life from God. But, if it be implied that Paul thus led the way to an entirely new conception of the Messianic Spirit, this does not seem to be correct. For, as we shall yet see in another connection, the Old Testament prophets declared that the Spirit that was to be given by God and made characteristic of the New Testament times was to be distinctively *moral* in its effects. So that Paul, in his higher ethical conception of the Spirit, was really only following the teaching of the Old Testament—the teaching of the Spirit itself.

With respect to the external or miraculous operations of the Spirit there is much that is obscure, which may never be completely cleared up. Their reality, however, cannot be doubted; for Paul in his universally acknowledged Epistles enumerates them, and points those who questioned

<sup>1</sup> *Vide also Stevens' The Theology of the New Testament, chap. ix.*

his authority as an apostle to them as evidence of the power and working of Christ through him; which he could not possibly have done had they not been very patent to observation. They seem, moreover, akin to the phenomena associated with Prophecy in its earlier and lower forms, and with some "Revivals" in later Christian times, and may thus carry us to the borders of a realm we are at present unable to explore. If we could depend with certainty on the narratives in Acts (and it is the absolutely certain facts only we are now seeking), the Spirit must have come on men in an external manner, and its outward effects have been abundant and varied. The natural inference from the accounts therein given would be that these experiences were the results of the direct operation of the risen and exalted Christ—showing themselves as they did only shortly after His Resurrection, the continuous proof of which, and of His exaltation, they constituted. There would thus be not a little to be said in support of the view that these were special acts of Christ (of a miraculous nature) abiding with His disciples "till the end of the days" (of the Jewish dispensation), and for the establishment of His Church in the world. That there was a real Supernatural inspiration in the early Church is witnessed to by the New Testament itself when its writings are compared with those of the period following. There are, however, undeniable difficulties in the way of this conception of these outward manifestations. It is difficult to understand how they should always follow the mere laying on of the apostles' hands,—unless, indeed, the risen Lord waited on that act and invariably responded to it for the sake of the manifestation of His presence with His Church. It is still more difficult to understand why Christ should thus sometimes directly work through men of apparently indifferent character; and to harmonise with His immediate action such scenes as were to be

witnessed in the Church at Corinth. "Sometimes half a dozen enthusiasts were on their legs at once, all pouring forth wild series of sounds which no human being present could understand, except that sometimes amidst these unseemly—and might they not at times, with some of these Syrian emissaries, be these half-simulated—ecstasies, there were heard words that made the blood run cold with shuddering horror" (Farrar's *Life of St. Paul*). We must ask also why Paul should rate them so low. It may be possible, however, while fully recognising the supernaturalness of the Spirit and Christ's real presence and working in His Church, to find another explanation of many of these outward manifestations. There can be no doubt that the inner and moral work of the Holy Spirit was that which was deepest and most important; and it is possible that, if we come rightly to understand what the Spirit *is* in this its most essential character, we may also see how these outward manifestations, while they evidenced a Divine, and, in the truest sense, Supernatural Presence in the Christian Church (which was what Paul said was their real purpose—to be "a sign to those who believed not"), were yet the perfectly natural effects of the new Spirit which the Christian Faith made men partakers of, as its influence made itself felt in those whose emotional nature was much stronger than our own, *and who believed in the Spirit as the source of such powers*. We can understand how, through faith in the apostolic message, they came under an influence producing exultant feelings that found strange expression, illuminating the understanding, quickening dormant faculties, creating a strong faith which, through its power to awaken a responsive faith in others, could even work "miracles" (or "powers" in the language of Paul), and thus confer the various gifts (charisms) that were needed for the guidance and governance of the infant Church. And it is not difficult to understand how, while

these manifestations served very important ends in the first Church in itself and in its relation to the unbelieving world, they would tend to overshadow the real ethical character of the Spirit and the true intent of its indwelling, so that, in the providence of God, they gradually ceased. They would naturally tend to cease indeed, as Christianity moved westwards and as Jewish Messianic beliefs died away. Leaving, therefore, these extraordinary and temporary manifestations in the comparative obscurity which overshadows them, let us concentrate our attention on the question, What the Holy Spirit really is, in the light of its deepest, essential, and abiding influences and effects.

## CHAPTER II

### AS THE SPIRIT OF GOD: THE SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE Holy Spirit is certainly "the Spirit of God," and this is its leading denomination in the New Testament. But, as we have seen, the Holy Spirit in the Christian sense is something new and distinctive of Christianity. We may be sure, therefore, that we do not adequately describe it (as it has frequently been described) as either (1) the Spirit of God as it is immanent in the nature of man, or (2) that Spirit in its general transcendence, or simply God as Spirit. Being the Spirit of God, it must be one with the Divine Spirit in all its manifestations and in its essential being. God in Himself is that Infinite Spirit, of which the whole universe is in some measure a manifestation. The Spirit of God is, in some real sense, at the basis of every man's life as a rational, moral, and spiritual being, yea, even as a living being. That Spirit is, doubtless, the source of *all* religious inspiration, aspiration, and life in all men everywhere, and, while it is, in this sense, "immanent" in man, there is nothing true and good that is not a medium whereby that Spirit in its transcendency manifests itself to and influences men. God as the Infinite Ethical Spirit is everywhere, and it is always possible for man to enter into communion with Him by coming into spiritual unison with God. All this is true; but, as represented in the New Testament records of Christian experience, "the Holy Spirit" is something

specific, in a sense *new*, and distinctive of Christianity. It is clearly distinguished from God, as He is in Himself, being "the Spirit we have *from* (literally, 'out of') God"; "the Spirit which God has given us."

#### THE SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The term undoubtedly comes to us from the Old Testament, where we have frequent mention of the "Spirit of God" and sometimes of "the Holy Spirit." Yet in Christianity there is something about the Spirit so new and special that it could be spoken of as "not yet," before the glorification of Christ (John vii. 39), and Paul could meet men, disciples of John, who had not heard of its gift (Acts xix. 1, 2). But in the Old Testament itself the Spirit is promised as something that should be distinctive of the coming days, and it is just this difference which distinguishes the new dispensation from the old, the times of fulfilment from those of promise. Without attempting at present to go beneath the scriptural language, or to ask what the Spirit of God in the Old Testament is in itself, let us endeavour to state briefly the way in which the Spirit is regarded in the Old Testament, and to show the features which were to distinguish that Spirit under the new Messianic dispensation that was to come.

A study of the references to the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, in the light of the general features of Old Testament religion, leads us to the following conclusions: The Spirit of God in the Old Testament represents the Divine agency in the world and the Divine operation in and on men; it is a power or energy proceeding from the living God, and in its operations we can distinguish two kinds of action—(1) creative or natural, such as might perhaps at the present day be described as "immanent"; and (2) inspirational or special; while under this last head again

we may distinguish (*a*) physical, (*b*) intellectual, (*c*) moral and religious inspiration.

(1) *Creative or Natural Action*.—It was the Spirit of God that moved, vivifyingly, or creatively, on the primeval “deep” (Gen. i. 2). “Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created,” says the Psalmist (Ps. civ. 30). It is the principle of the natural life in man. When man’s days were to be shortened it was said, “My Spirit shall not always strive (or ‘rule,’ or, according to various readings, ‘dwell’) in man” (Gen. vi. 3). It is the source of man’s natural disposition and powers. In this sense God is “the God of the spirits of all flesh,” knowing, therefore, what is in man and able to appoint suitable men to special offices (Num. xvi. 22, xxvii. 16).

(2) *Special or Inspirational*.—It is the source of special endowments. Joseph had his superior wisdom because the Spirit of God dwelt in him (Gen. xli. 38). In Exodus xxviii. 3 we read of “all the wise hearted whom I have filled with the Spirit of wisdom.” Of Bezalel it is said: “See, I have called by name Bezalel—and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and in understanding and in all manner of workmanship” (Ex. xxxi. 3, xxxv. 31). The foregoing might, possibly, be referred to the creative or immanent action of God’s Spirit; but in Judges (iii. 10) we read how the Spirit *came* on Othniel so that he judged Israel, on Gideon (vi. 34), on Jephthah (xi. 29); how it “began to move” Samson (xiii. 25), and “came mightily upon him,” enduing him with physical strength (xiv. 6, 19, xv. 14). Again, we read how it “came mightily” on Saul, and again departed from him (1 Sam. x. 6, xvi. 14); and how it “came mightily on David” after his anointing (1 Sam. xvi. 13). We also read of it carrying Elijah away (1 Kings xviii. 12; 2 Kings ii. 16); and lifting Ezekiel up and carrying him, at least in spiritual vision, to Jerusalem (Ezek. ii. 2, viii. 3, xi. 1, etc.).

It was the power that illuminated and moved *the prophet*. Even on Balaam and on Saul and on the messengers of Saul, the Spirit came so that they prophesied, and Saul was "turned into another man" (Num. xxiv. 2; 1 Sam. x. 6-10, xix. 20, 23). The Spirit that was upon Moses was "taken" and "put upon" the elders of Israel, so that they were qualified to assist Moses in his work, and prophesied (Num. xi. 17, 25-27). Nehemiah says, "Thou gavest Thy good Spirit to instruct them" (ix. 20), and "testified against them by Thy Spirit through Thy prophets" (ix. 30). The foolish prophets were they that "followed their own spirit and saw nothing" (Ezek. xiii. 3). Zechariah speaks of "the word which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit by the hand of the former prophets" (vii. 12). See also Micah iii. 8; Hosea ix. 7.

It was the source, not only of religious knowledge, but of *moral and religious inspiration*, and so of the Divine blessing on the people. It is in the Psalms and in the later prophets that this aspect of the Spirit's work appears, and, except in the Messianic predictions, references thereto are fewer than we might expect. In the 143rd Psalm (10th verse) we have the prayer, "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God; Thy Spirit is good (or let Thy good Spirit); lead me in the land of uprightness." The prayer in the 51st Psalm (ver. 11), "Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," has probably this reference also, although it may possibly refer to prolongation of life. But, as we shall see, this ethical aspect of the Spirit's work comes out with special clearness in the Messianic predictions.

The Spirit was, indeed, the Divine influence operating in the world, however exerted, and all kinds of Divine action seem to be ascribed to it. "Shall it be said," asks Micah, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these His doings?" (ii. 7). "Not by might, nor by power, but by My

Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," was the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel (Zech. iv. 6). And Isaiah asks, "Who hath directed (or meted out) the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him?" (xl. 13). It might come as a Spirit of judgment, as when it is said, "The Lord hath poured out on you the spirit of a deep slumber (Isa. xxix. 10); and "the Lord hath mingled a spirit of perverseness in the midst of her" (Isa. xix. 14).

#### WHETHER PERSONAL?

In the Old Testament, the Spirit, while it was the Spirit of the personal God, cannot be said to have been conceived as a Person in itself, at least in anything like the modern sense of the word. In one or two passages in the later writings it seems to be identified with the presence of the Lord Himself, as, perhaps, in Psalm li. 11, "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me"; and in the 139th Psalm (ver. 7), "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" but these do not imply a separate personality of the Spirit. It was certainly *by His Spirit* that God was with men, as we read in Haggai (ii. 5), "I am with you according to the word that I covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt, and My Spirit abode (or abideth) among you: fear ye not." Sometimes, too, it was conceived as "more or less material," and in not a few passages as "very independent, as in the long-run every influence proceeding from a person, 'wisdom, word, or spirit,' can be poetically represented as independent within its own sphere of action" (Schultz). The strongest passage in this respect is Isaiah Ixiii. 10, 11: "They rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit—Where is He that put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them"; see also the passage from Haggai ii. 5, quoted above. But, as Dr. Dale remarks (*Christian Doctrine*,

p. 317), "In no passage in the Old Testament is there any clear evidence that either Psalmist or Prophet knew that the Spirit of God is a Divine Person; to all of them He was a Divine Power. Now and then they imaginatively personify the Power of God, as they personify the Word of God." Still, "the Spirit" is always the Spirit of the living personal God, representing the entire Divine agency in the world and on or in men; and, perhaps, we cannot state the Old Testament Doctrine of the Spirit in this respect better than in the words of Professor A. B. Davidson: "The Old Testament teaches, not that Jehovah is a Spirit, but that He has a Spirit, just as man has a spirit. And though in speech we can distinguish between man and his spirit, virtually the spirit of man is man. And the Spirit of God is God, but with that connotation that 'spirit' always carries of energy or power. The Spirit of God is God exerting power, especially life-giving power or that highest power which we call spiritual" ("The Theology of Isaiah," *Expository Times*, vol. vi. 12. See also vol. xi. 21, "The Spirit of God in the Old Testament")."<sup>1</sup> We would only add that there was a tendency to regard the Spirit as a separate power and to personify or personalise it. While in the Spirit *we* may see only God acting in a certain way, we do not find in the Old Testament anything approaching to philosophical reflection on the Spirit in its relation to God. The Spirit was a power sent forth by God, by means of which he was the Creator and Inspirer of men. The tendency to personalise the Spirit seems to have increased during post-canonical times; while yet it was regarded as a gift from God.

<sup>1</sup> So Dr. Swete in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. 'Holy Spirit,' says "the concept of a distinction of Persons within the Being of God belongs to a later revelation"; so also Dr. Sanday, art. 'God.'

## THE SPIRIT IN THE MESSIANIC PROMISES

Let us ask now, in the light of the Messianic anticipations and predictions, what were to be the distinguishing marks of the Holy Spirit in that new dispensation which was to follow, or the days of the Kingdom of God?

We would remark, at the outset, that the new dispensations was clearly to be distinguished as one in which there should be a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah sees no hope "until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high"; then, "judgment (justice) shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness, shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever" (*Isa. xxxii. 15–17*).

(1) One distinguishing mark should be the *universality* of the gift. Under the old dispensation, the gift and operation of the Spirit were exceptional—confined to the few, to certain individuals who were, we must believe, of exceptional organisation—prophets and others. But these same prophets were thus inspired to look forward to a time when a new and wider, even a universal dispensation of the Spirit should be given. They beheld in the future a coming One on whom the Spirit of the Lord should rest in an especial manner (*Isa. xi. 2, xlvi. 1, lxi. 1*); the days were to arrive when "the Spirit should be poured out on all flesh," and "prophecy" should be common to all (*Joel ii. 28, 29*); when "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (*Jer. xxxi. 34*); yea, the time was coming when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (*Isa. xi. 9; Hab. ii. 14*).

(2) It should be distinctively *ethical* in its character and work. In the old Testament times—the earlier times at least—the Spirit was not always such. It came as impulse, enthusiasm, intellectual skill and discernment, and even as physical might, apart from holiness of character. It might come upon a person of any kind of character, the primary condition being, apparently, not moral, but organic or physical, and the end of its bestowal certain service to be rendered. But, as looked for and promised in the coming time, it was to be distinctively (although not exclusively) ethical in its influence. It was to the pouring out of an ethical Spirit—Holy in the true sense of the word—Isaiah (xxxii. 15–17) looked for the blessed results he pictured; and it was because of an ethical work in the hearts of men that Jeremiah anticipated a universal knowledge of God (xxxi. 33, 34). So the Spirit that should rest on the coming One from the stock of Jesse should be, not only one of “wisdom and understanding” as mere intellectual qualities, but also “of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, so that His delight should be in the fear of the Lord” (Isa. xi. 1–3). Where it is promised, “I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed and My blessing upon thy offspring,” the effect should be that they would devote themselves to the Lord (Isa. xliv. 3, 5). Again, we read: “This is My covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed—for ever” (Isa. lix. 21). In Ezekiel the ethical character and effect of the promised Spirit’s work comes out very distinctly: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you—I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them” (xxxvi. 26, 27). Again, “I will put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live . . . and the nations shall know that I am

the Lord that sanctify Israel" (xxxvii. 14, 28). And again, "Neither will I hide My face any more from them; for I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God" (xxxix. 29). So, in Zechariah (xii. 10) we read, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look unto Me (or Him) whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son." With which passages we may compare the specific promise of that "new covenant" which Christ declared was ratified by His blood, as given by Jeremiah (xxxi. 33), "I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people"; after which follows the prediction of the universal knowledge of the Lord. It is, indeed, just in this distinctively *moral* quality of the Spirit under the new dispensation that its universality can be understood; for it is in moral possibility, more than in anything else, that all men stand on a common ground before God. So that, when Paul emphasised the ethical quality of the Holy Spirit, he was simply following out the declarations of the Old Testament Messianic prophecy.

(3) The Spirit under the new dispensation was to be the means of bringing to men a *special Divine indwelling* with the blessed consciousness thereof. While, as we have seen in a few passages in the later Old Testament writings, the Holy Spirit appears to be regarded as that through which the presence and indwelling of God were realised in men's hearts, this feature is by no means prominent in the Old Testament. But the impartation of a sense of the Divine indwelling should specially characterise the Spirit as it was yet to be given to men, according to the promises made through many of the prophets, and expressly referred to by Paul as fulfilled through the gift of the Holy Spirit, "even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will

be their God, and they shall be My people ; and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi. 16, 18; cf. Jer. xxxi. 33, xxxii. 38; Ezek. xi. 20, xxxvi. 28, xxxvii. 26, etc.; Zech. viii. 8, xiii. 9). Through this Spirit, therefore, God should be personally dwelling in our hearts, and His Fatherly presence so realised by us that we should be in joyful truth His very sons and daughters.

(4) The passages quoted (and other similar passages), in their connection, also show that the promised outpouring of the Spirit was to be the fruit of God's *redemptive* grace and mercy. It is the gracious gift of a God who had been sinned against and grieved by the departure of His people from Himself, and who now draws nigh to them in pitying, forgiving Love, and in fuller, holier influence, so as to constitute them in inmost ethical truth His people. "A Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to them that turn from transgression in Jacob" (Isa. lix. 20; see also Jer. xxxi. 10, 11, 34, xxxiii. 8; Isa. xii. 1, xliv. 6, lxi. 1-11; Ezek. xxxvi. 21-38, xxxvii. 11-14, xxxix. 25-29; Zech. xii. 10, xiii. 1, etc.). This promise of the fuller, universal, ethical, and redemptive outpouring of the Spirit is just, as we have already seen, the great promise of the new covenant that was fulfilled through Christ.

The Holy Spirit therefore in the Old Testament, while not in itself regarded as a separate Person, has always been that in which God has been present and operative in the world and on men. It is the Divine Power in the Creation, and is that same Power as it comes to men, moving, inspiring, empowering them. It is the source of Divine knowledge and of the truly religious (ethical and spiritual) life in man, through which he has also the consciousness of the Divine Presence within him and the Divine blessing resting on him. The promise of the Messianic times, or the new

dispensation, was that of the merciful and gracious drawing nigh of God to His people, and the fuller even the universal outpouring of His Spirit, so as to make men His children in ethical truth and give them the knowledge of the Lord, the consciousness of the Divine indwelling, and the heritage of the Divine blessing. And this was to be ushered in through One on whom the Spirit should rest in special measure.

We cannot but be impressed by the unity and continuity in the teaching of Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit, and by the progressive character of the Divine revelation and manifestation thus exhibited. There is a real development, and the Holy Spirit in Christianity appears as the culmination of that working wherein God was specially manifested to Israel; becoming therein something *new* in its manifestation. While it is the same Spirit that was present and working in Old Testament times, we are led, from the Old Testament itself, to look for a distinct advance in its presence and operation.

*Note.*—Critical conclusions as to the date and authorship of particular portions of the Old Testament do not affect the present subject (except, indeed, as they may more fully illustrate development), and, while they have been kept in view, no special attempt has been made here to give effect to them.

## CHAPTER III

### AS THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

#### IN ITS "IMPERSONAL" INFLUENCES: THE HOLY SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND LOVE

THE Spirit is also spoken of as "the Spirit of Christ." It is the Spirit of *God*; but it is that Spirit as it dwelt in and comes to us through Jesus Christ, as the culmination of all the previous Divine working, and as it comes thus to dwell in every man to make him partaker in the life of the sons of God.

As we have seen, it is just the fact that this Spirit so comes to men through Jesus that constitutes Him the Christ of God—the fact that He has "received" the great promise of the Father, so as to shed it forth on men. The primitive conception of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Church was, undoubtedly, that of a gift given by God to Christ and by Christ to men. As stated in all the Gospels, the great mission of the Christ was to baptize men with, or in, the Holy Spirit, and it was this He was believed to have done after He had risen and ascended to the Father. The Gospels and Paul, moreover, teach that the Holy Spirit was the Divine principle and indwelling Presence and Power of God in Christ Himself. Therefore, even as the Spirit that dwelt in Christ and that is given by or through Christ, the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Christ.

We ask next, therefore, How are we to conceive of this Spirit as it comes to us from, or through, *Christ*? Is it personal or impersonal? Does it consist only in the influ-

ences that flow from the life and death, the work and gospel of Christ ; or is there something more than these, even a Divine, personal presence and power ? The answer which the evidence leads us to give is that it includes *both*, and that neither can be safely ignored or forgotten. And it is keeping this fact in mind that enables us to understand the various forms of reference to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament writings.

### *The "Impersonal" Influences*

Let us take, first, what we may call, for the sake of distinctness, the *impersonal* influences, although these are not really to be *separated* from God and Christ. They come to *us* impersonally, but they are alive in the Divine Life. Spirit is of course a word of wide meaning. Signifying primarily "breath," it came to denote influence, energy, vitality, essence, as well as incorporeal personal being, and may therefore be properly spoken of impersonally as well as personally. We may speak thus of "the spirit of a religion" as distinguished from what is merely outward and literal. In this sense we undoubtedly find the spirit of the religion of Christ spoken of by Paul as the inner reality that was only shadowed forth in the outward ordinances of the Jewish religion. Christianity is the religion of Spirit and of truth as distinguished from the outward and imperfect. So, again, we may speak of the spirit that proceeds from a person's life and teaching. As has been well said, "A spirit, *i.e.* an immaterial power, goes forth from a certain number of deeds or words, which proceed from one person or more, according as it is more or less mighty ; it then modifies the ideas, the sentiments, the conduct of those who live in the atmosphere created or spread abroad by it. Christ has thus created around Him a fire of spiritual life, which from the time it was first

kindled spreads ceaselessly, by degrees transforming humanity by penetrating it with its vivifying and genial light.”<sup>1</sup> A great Personality continues to live thus through the impersonal influences of his spirit, and this is above all true of Jesus Christ. His Spirit lives thus with a power that belongs to that of no other person, and even in its impersonal influences it is not less powerful after all the centuries that have passed since He was on earth, but is mightier than ever. As the ages pass it grows in power.

Now, whatever we may think at present concerning the relation of the Spirit of Christ to God, or concerning the actual personal presence of Christ Himself in the Spirit, it is certainly in and through these “*impersonal*” influences the Spirit first comes to us through Christ, and these are, therefore, of the utmost importance. There can be no question at all that the Holy Spirit as it comes to us through Christ is the Spirit and power of a new and higher *life*. But it is a moral and spiritual life—the life of man as a son of God ; and such life cannot be quickened in our hearts by mere impulse, or in some magical or semi-physical way, but through moral and spiritual influences, felt as such, and freely responded to on our part, otherwise we should be mere machines. These influences (although really inseparable from the personal Christ) come to us as impersonal moral influences, and it is in them that we see the nature or character of the Spirit. Spirit in itself is wholly invisible and intangible, but it makes its reality and nature manifest by expressing itself in certain *forms*, apart from which we should know nothing of it ; and the words, the life and death of Christ, His gospel, the whole influences proceeding from His marvellous Personality, and from the entire manifestation of God in Him when apprehended in its truth, become the forms or vehicles through which the Spirit of God in Christianity goes forth to influence men.

<sup>1</sup> Réville, *A Manual of Religious Instruction*, p. 235.

A Spirit, if it is to influence others, must find some medium of expression. The apostle speaks of the Spirit which they "received" from God. How can we *receive* a Spirit? Watch the eloquent orator who harangues the assembled multitude. The Spirit of Patriotism, or of Justice, or of Philanthropy, or of Religion glows within his soul. As he speaks, his words are more than words merely. The spirit that is in him goes forth through the words and through his whole action, till it touches and moves the hearts before him, and kindles within them enthusiasm for the cause which he is advocating. The spirit that is in him passes through his words and actions to those whom he addresses. So from Christ, through His words and deeds, above all from His Cross and the gospel founded on it, the Spirit of God that was in Him goes forth to move men's hearts and to possess them—to become that Spirit of life in them which it was in Himself. That was, as it were, the Divine oration, the living Word of God to men, and therefore it is through belief in Christ and His gospel that men "receive" the Spirit.

### *The Spirit of Truth and Love*

The nearest approach to a *definition* or *description* of the Spirit in the New Testament is given us in the Fourth Gospel, and for that reason we shall begin with it. In His parting address to His disciples, Jesus, when speaking of the Spirit that the Father should send in His name, to dwell with them for ever, describes it as "*the Spirit of Truth*," and makes *Love* the condition of its presence with them.

I. First, it was "the Spirit of Truth, whom the world could not receive, because it saw Him not, neither knew Him" (xiv. 17); "the Spirit that should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance that He had said to them" (xiv. 26); "the Spirit of Truth, which

proceedeth from the Father, and should bear witness of Him" (xv. 26); "the Spirit of Truth who, when He was come, should guide them into all the truth" (xvi. 13).

2. But, secondly, the condition of this Spirit's coming to them, and dwelling in them, and of all that Christ then promised to His disciples, was *Love*—Love toward Himself and toward one another. Throughout these discourses He ever returns to this and emphasises this as the chief thing. This was what *they* had to cherish, and, cherishing this Love, they should have the Spirit dwelling with and in them for ever. "If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments, and I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth" (xiv. 17). His "word" or "commandment" was especially that He had just given them as *His* great "word" and "new commandment," by keeping which they should be distinguished as His disciples, namely, "that ye love one another even as I have loved you" (xiii. 34). In the coming of that Spirit, both He and the Father should come and make their abode with them (xiv. 19–23); but, again, Love is the secret of this manifestation; as He said to Judas, who asked, how that manifestation should be given to them and not to the world, "If a man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth Me not keepeth not My words" (xiv. 23, 24). Again, their promised joy, through the Spirit, could only be fulfilled if they kept His commandments; and "this," He said, "is My commandment, That ye love one another, even as I have loved you" (xv. 12). While the Spirit is described as the Spirit of Truth, its coming and abiding are strictly conditioned by *our* cherishing the Spirit of Love.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wendt maintains that the Spirit of Truth is here = the Spirit of *rectitude* (*The Teaching of Jesus*, vol. ii. 292 (see also vol. i. 260)). This

Similarly, in the First Epistle of John, the Spirit by which "God abideth (or dwells) in us" is distinctly declared to be the Spirit of Truth and Love: "Hereby know we that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He gave us" (iii. 24). This Spirit was known and distinguished from every other Spirit because it recognised and confessed and brought home to their hearts the truth of God's revelation of Himself in His Son (iv. 2, 3, etc.). As such it was "the Spirit of Truth" (iv. 6); nay, "the Spirit *is* the Truth" (v. 7). But this revelation of God in Christ which the Spirit thus bore witness to, was that of "the Love of God in our case" (iv. 9), and it is *as this Love* dwells in us that God dwells in us: "No man hath beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us; hereby know we that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit—*God is Love*, and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him" (iv. 12, 13, 16, 17). So, again, we are "born of God" when "born of the Spirit," but they who were so made the children of God were "born of Love"; "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is Love" (iv. 7). It was just in order that we might be born into this life of love that the Son of God was sent into the world: "Herein was the love of God manifested in our case, that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*"; then follows the statement already

*true* Spirit would thus be the Spirit of Love in our hearts. But the Spirit that Christ promised was also to be a teaching Spirit—taking of the things of Christ and showing them to disciples, and guiding them into all the truth.

quoted, that it is through the indwelling of love that God dwells in us (iv. 9-12).

Here then there can be no doubt that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and Love proceeding from God through Jesus Christ. We may go further and say that it is the Spirit of Truth *because* it is the Spirit of Love. If Love in its lower aspects is "blind," in its higher aspects it is the great illuminator. It is only when we love a person that we truly know him, and it is only then that we feel the full influence of his spirit. So, it is only when we love Christ that we can come to know the full truth about Christ, and it is only when we love God that we, in any real measure, know God. The Spirit of Love, therefore, becomes the Spirit of Truth or of Revelation in our hearts, making clear what is otherwise dark, and enabling us to know God and Christ in their truth, and to realise their presence with us. And it is doubtless because the Spirit in its essential being is Love, that Love was made by Christ the condition of its indwelling. It is only as *we* come into the same Spirit of holy love that we can have the Divine presence and indwelling in our hearts. For it is God's own Spirit coming through Christ, and God is essentially *Love*.

If we turn now to *Paul*, we shall find the same thing, although not so definitely expressed. As we have seen, it was "in the Spirit" that the power of his preaching resided, and it was *Faith* that united men to Christ and made them partakers of the Spirit. Sometimes Paul seems to attribute to *Faith* all that at other times he ascribes to the Spirit. But such Faith was only made possible to men through the preaching of the gospel: "How shall they believe of whom they have not heard." Now, what was it that this preaching conveyed to men but just the *Truth*, the Truth of God's Grace and Love, as revealed

in Christ? With Paul, as with John, the message was "the Love of God in our case," the Love of God as it expressed itself, above all, in the Cross of Christ. Therefore, Paul, when he would let his preaching be "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," preached above all else *the Cross*, and was "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him as crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2, 4). It was in no mere reasoning or "wisdom of men" but in the marvellous *deed* of God in Christ, that the power of the gospel resided. Christ crucified was "the power of God and the wisdom of God." It was thus men were, through faith, made "partakers of Christ" and were "born again," not of the flesh but of the Spirit, "through" (to use the words of another apostle) "the word of the Lord which by the gospel was preached unto them." The Spirit, therefore, came in power through that truth which was the proclamation of the love of God in Christ.

What, according to Paul, was the Faith that saved a man? He tells us plainly: "In Christ Jesus nothing avails but a new creature," or "Faith working (or wrought) through Love" (Gal. v. 6, vi. 15).

Again, it is "the Love of God" which the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts, a Love which kindles ours. But the knowledge of that Love could only come through Faith in the word of the gospel. Moreover, the Holy Spirit which God has given us is none other than the Spirit of Christ, "the Spirit of God's Son" in our hearts; and what was the Spirit of Christ but Love itself?

Or, take "*the Spirit*" as it is so frequently put by Paul in contrast with "*the flesh*." What is the principle of "*the flesh*" but Self, and what is the Divine principle that wars against and overcomes this self-principle in our hearts, but Holy Love? Accordingly, while Paul states the secret of the Christian life to the Galatians by saying, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the desires of

the flesh" (v. 16), the self-same truth is expressed in the Epistle to the Ephesians in the exhortation, "Walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us" (v. 1). It is Love that is the element of the Christian life in the Spirit.

And so, in Paul's description of "the fruits of the Spirit," Love has the first place, and it is easy to see that the other fruits are the results of Love dwelling in the heart, creating joy, peace, long-suffering, and the rest. Nay, when he enumerates the more striking outward manifestations of the Spirit, he makes Love far superior to them all. Love was the one eternally abiding, Divine reality; therefore let them "follow after Love" (1 Cor. xiv. 1, xv.). Nor is it difficult to understand how all the lower gifts which men were unduly esteeming had their source in exulting and overpowering feelings of joy created in their hearts by the gospel revelation of the Truth and Love of God as manifested in their behalf in Christ Jesus, combined with their belief in, and expectation of, such promised powers of the Spirit. Paul thus entirely agrees with John with respect to the essential nature of the Holy Spirit as being the Divine Truth and Love as these came to men through Jesus Christ.

If we turn now to the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit to the first Christians given in Acts, we may be better able to understand what was the Divine Reality in the first reception of the Spirit by the Church after Christ's departure. We say "after His departure," for during His whole life the Spirit was in some measure proceeding from Him to His disciples. They were waiting and praying for the promised Spirit, and, as they waited and prayed, it came. There was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind that filled the place, but the Spirit was not in the wind. There were tongues of fire that sat on their heads, but, again (as in Elijah's vision), the Spirit was not

in the fire. They spake with tongues, too, yet this also was but an outward sign of the Spirit's presence in their hearts. Doubtless, as to Elijah on Horeb, the Spirit came to those Christian disciples in "a still small voice" that whispered within. As they waited they mused, and, "as they mused, the fire burned." Their love for their Lord kept them faithful, and showed itself in their obedience to His word. They believed in Him in spite of His death; the Cross, however inexplicable it might seem, could not have been His defeat, but must have had some Divine meaning and purpose. And, as thus moved by *Love*, they waited and prayed, and pondered the sayings of the Master, and searched the Old Testament Scriptures, the *Truth* flashed upon them—the Truth that was the Spirit's teaching therein, blending with the words and memory of the Master. Suddenly, the darkness of their souls was illumined by the inshining of this light from heaven, their hearts were filled with joy, and, in the new exultant confidence that came to them, they were "clothed with power from on High." *Now*, they saw the meaning of His death; *now* they were sure He had risen and was alive. "O fools and blind! Was it not written that the Christ should suffer?" Was it not part of the predetermined plan of God? The death that had seemed so dark was the highest manifestation of the love of God in His Son, even a sacrifice for the sins of guilty men. Jesus had really been made the Christ through death; God had only for a time taken Him to Himself—exalted to His right hand—and He would come again in glory. What a change; what a deliverance it was from the darkness in which they had been sitting, while yet their love kept its hold on their Master. As this new joy filled their souls they felt that here at last was the crowning proof of the resurrection and exaltation of their Lord. He had verily received the promise of the Father, and had sent it down in power upon them. *All which was entirely true,*

if not in the bare letter, yet, assuredly, in the Spirit. Christ was verily *there*, united with them in that same Love that dwelt in them. Can we wonder if they acted like men beside themselves, so that bystanders said "these men are full of new wine"; or can we be surprised at the confidence with which Peter began at once to speak to the multitude, now that the dark problem that had been for forty days oppressing him had suddenly become filled with light; or can we marvel at the power with which the apostles now gave their witness to the Resurrection of Christ, and with which their words came home to the people? Here, again, unless we are to fall back on the crudely marvellous, we see the Spirit to be the Spirit of Truth and Love,—must we not say, to *them* at least, the Spirit of Truth *because* the Spirit of Love? And this conclusion is confirmed by what we read of the continued manifestation of the Spirit in these early days. There was never such a life of Love realised by men on the earth. "All that believed were together, and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need."—"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts ii. 44–47, iv. 32–35). Could anything have brought *this* about, but a Spirit of overmastering Love; and was not this at the same time the *true* Spirit?

If we go next to *the Gospels* and behold the life of Jesus, we shall see more clearly than anywhere else, perhaps, what the Spirit of Christ is, as an ethical Spirit and influence. The mission of Christ was to "baptize men with, or in, the Holy Spirit"; but, as that Spirit was the deepest principle of His own life, expressing itself in all that He said and did, He was continually radiating forth

its influences. He was "filled with the Spirit," or, as in the Fourth Gospel, "the Father dwelt in Him." But God is Love, and to be filled with the Spirit of God, or to have "the Father" dwelling in Him, was (on the ethical side at least) to be filled with Love. His whole life was manifestly the expression of Divine Love; and it reached its culmination in that Cross on which He gave Himself for us. Pouring forth His life there on our behalf, He poured forth that Spirit of Love which was His Life, in such a way that, when its meaning was apprehended, the same Love might be kindled in our hearts, and thus the Spirit of the Divine life (His own Spirit and the Spirit of the Father, might live within us. And so, in His teaching, the Father, whose Spirit is "around us ever" and free to every man, was that Perfect Being who is Love going forth for ever to all; and His great endeavour in the instruction of His disciples was to make them the true sons of that Heavenly Father by their becoming like Him in Love (Matt. v. 43, 48).

As being Himself the Son who knew the Father, His *Word* was also the expression of the *Truth* of God. The Spirit, no doubt it was, that should found God's kingdom; for the Spirit alone is life. But just as the life in Nature finds its medium in the seed, so Jesus spoke of His "word" as the medium or seed of the life of the kingdom of God: "the Sower soweth the word." In like manner He spoke of Himself—of His Person—as being at once the Truth of God and the Love that is the Life of God (the two ideas are inseparable), and as such the true life of men: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life." And He explained to those who stumbled at His saying that the words He thus spake were not to be understood materially, but were "spirit and life." So, when we read in the same Gospel that "the Spirit was not yet (given) because that Jesus was not yet glorified," we must remember

that it was His being lifted up on the Cross that was His supreme glorification as being the crowning manifestation of the Father's life and love in Himself, and that, until this took place, the Spirit, which proceeds above all from the Cross, could not possibly be given in the fulness of its truth and power. Thus it was necessary for Him to go away before the Spirit could come to men, not only because the Cross implied such a putting off of the flesh as should enable Him to be a living Spirit in the very hearts of His disciples, and not only because as long as He was present with them in the flesh, their carnal views and expectations hindered their perception of the Divine truth as it was revealing itself in Him; but also and chiefly because the Cross was the supreme expression of that Love *through which* He should dwell in the hearts of His disciples.

If we think now of "*the Spirit of Christ*" as the sum of all the influences which proceed from His life, or as the essence of the religion He preached and in His own Person realised and manifested, as that Spirit makes itself felt as a very definite and real influence in the world, what better name can we find for it than the Holy Spirit of Truth and Love? As such a Spirit, the Spirit of Christ is most certainly here in the world to-day, and is recognised as such by all men. When we commend conduct as being "Christlike," or condemn it as "contrary to, or devoid of, the Christian Spirit," we have in view those features of perfect Truth and Charity which were so conspicuously manifested in the liberal mind, the beneficent actions, and the self-sacrificing conduct of Christ. It is only as the same Truth and Love possess us that the Spirit of God and of Christ dwells in us.

If we turn, finally, to "the Spirit" as in the Old Testa-

ment, we shall see the same truth illustrated. Prophets and holy men of old were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Now what could so inspire and move men but some vision of Truth or enthusiasm of Love? Prophecy in its lower forms is common to all nations. Behind the sensuous world is the unseen supersensuous world, and men with a certain organisation or natural endowment may have been capable of entering in some measure into communication with that unseen world. Chiefly by ecstasy and suchlike means they seem to have been able to get beyond themselves, as it were. But that which raised Hebrew prophecy above all that belonged to those lower forms of prophetic inspiration was its growing perception of *moral truth* and its enthusiastic devotion thereto. Apart from this, there might be some kind of exterior entrance into the supersensuous world ; but just as men of prophetic temperament saw and found their inspiration in moral and spiritual truth, did they come into contact with God in reality, and it was this that made Israelitish prophecy stand alone in the world, and become the medium of a veritably divinely-revealed religion. Their real Divine inspiration lay in the hold the Truth and Love of God took on them. Still, the forms in which the Truth and Love of God were recognised were as yet imperfect. These were Nature, Providence, or the national History, and the Moral Law within, revealing the Being and Holiness of God in some measure, and bringing home to the heart intensely His Love for the nation, but with glimpses only of the deep, ethical, universal and yet particular, in a word, infinite and eternal, Love of God. Those who possess a measure of Truth are, if their natures be attuned to Truth, conscious that they know only in part, and that a fuller revelation is to come. Those inspired men saw, therefore, more or less clearly, that the Truth, the Holiness, and Love of God were not as yet fully expressed in the world ; and thus the very Truth and Love

that dwelt within them led them to look forward to a fuller revelation of God's Truth and Love, and to a truer expression of His kingdom on the earth. It was thus they were led to anticipate the new Messianic days. Although it was only dimly and uncertainly that they could see into the future, the Spirit told them that this fuller manifestation would come—of the great moral fact they were sure, and therefore we read, they "sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what (time) or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ that was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them (1 Pet. i. 10-12).

It was as he came into this holy (ethical) Spirit that *the saint of old* truly found God. It is the fact that men did so find God that distinguishes the religion of Israel from all other religions, and the Old Testament from all other religious books. It is this that gives us so much in the Prophets and in the Psalms and in the Old Testament narratives that fits into our own religious life to-day. The desire to find God inspires all religions. But God is Spirit, and can only be really found by men as they come into the true and Holy Spirit that He is. Because Israelitish faith was enabled, in some real and growing measure, to come into that Spirit, it found God as God was found nowhere else. It really found Him just as it came *into that Spirit*. There it touched the Divine Reality, and found that which would live through all the illusions of life, and through all its disenchantments, disappointments, and discipline, and was bound to rise again even from seeming death into a new and higher life. Still, in the earlier periods of their religion especially, it seemed that it was only those specially organised men, the prophets, who had evidence, in the attendant manifestations of prophecy, of thus being in communion with God. But it was not in these outward

things, but in the inner moral Spirit, that men really met with God; and just as this came to be perceived, there came the glowing conviction to the true prophet's heart that *all* would yet be prophets in the highest sense, and the desire, as put into the lips of Moses, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets!" It was the perception of this that led to those Messianic prophecies of the *universality* of inspiration and Divine communion which we have already had before us, and this universality was possible just because it was through an *ethical* Spirit real communion with God was to be found, such a Spirit being within the reach of all, whatever their natural endowments.

It is the realisation of this that was so foreseen that we have in Christianity, although in the early Church the tendency was still to lay stress on the outward manifestations. From the whole manifestation of God in Christ that Spirit goes forth which God essentially *is*, and just as that Spirit comes to possess us do we "find access in the one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). In no other way can man find that God who is Spirit, save as the eternal and invisible Spirit manifests Himself; and that manifestation, begun in Nature and continued in Providence and in Conscience, finds its full expression and power in Christ. Just as we ourselves come into that Holy Spirit that God is, do we really and truly find *God*, and "the peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" that pertain to such communion. It cannot be otherwise; for God is Spirit, and *must* be worshipped in spirit and in truth, if He is to be really worshipped at all. Through the Spirit of Christ thus regarded, we find the realisation of that universal indwelling of God which even men in Old Testament times felt flowed, of necessity, from the very nature of the God in whom they believed.

The Holy Spirit, therefore, as the Spirit of Christ (and

of God coming to us through Him), is first and fundamentally *an ethical Spirit*. It is essentially the spirit and power of the Truth and Love of God, manifested in Christ, and coming to us in the entire teaching and influence of His life and work, above all from His Cross. For its indwelling we are, therefore, dependent on the knowledge of that Divine manifestation in Christ, and, for its full experience, on faith therein. But, while it comes to us through "the word of the Truth," it comes also in other ways. It is not the Truth as expressed in human words or acts that is the Spirit itself; these are only the media of its expression or manifestation; and even as it comes to us through these media that express it, it is something far greater than words can utter, more subtle than we can formulate, and often wholly hidden in its mode of working. As it came to those disciples from the whole life of Christ, it was something far more than could be put into words; so it may come to us from Christian lives, from our own experience, and in countless unspoken ways; and its entrance into our hearts may be very gradual and even unconscious. Still, its fullest manifestation is through the life, the word, the work of Christ, and the Spirit fills us as we enter into "the mind of Christ," and as the Love that dwelt in Him dwells in us. Only *where* and *as* the Truth and Love of God that were completely manifested in Christ dwell in the heart, can God, who *is* Love, or Christ, who was its manifestation, truly dwell. Everything else is external, and, apart from this inner ethical reality, no more to be depended on than the *external* manifestations associated with old-time Prophecy.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AS PERSONAL—THE REAL PRESENCE OF GOD AND OF CHRIST

IT will be already apparent that the Spirit in itself is *more* than the moral and spiritual influences in which it comes to us. It would be a great mistake to think of the Holy Spirit in Christianity as bringing only impersonal influences from God and Christ. In the Fourth Gospel Christ speaks always of the Spirit in a *personal* form. But it would be equally an error to think of the Spirit as a *separate* person, in anything like the human sense, from God and from Christ. It is the Spirit *of* God and the Spirit *of* Christ. We cannot rightly separate between God and His Spirit, or between Christ and His Spirit. According to Christ it was that same Spirit of God that dwelt in Himself that should come to His disciples, including His own Personality in the Spirit, and bringing to them the presence and indwelling of both the Father and the Son. But in the discourse in John xiv.—xvi., He told them that He had been speaking to them in “proverbs” or “parables”; and if we make the Holy Spirit of which He spake a new and separate individual Person, we admit into our thought an element that works confusion, and that, more than anything else of an intellectual nature, hinders the realisation of the Spirit as the great thing in Christianity. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the personal God, and therefore—

*First*, it brought to the hearts of believers the con-

viction of the real presence of God with them according to the promise of His coming to dwell with men. It did this because it brought them into real communion with God. The Spirit of God *is* God in His essential nature, and as He goes out to men. Therefore Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit which they had received as the Spirit of God analogous to the spirit of a man : "the Spirit that searches all things, even the deep things of God." But, again, another apostle writes : "Where *Love* dwells God dwells, and he that dwells in *Love* dwells in God; for God *is Love*." The Spirit is His essence; but *Love* is His essence. This is God in the deepest ethical truth of His nature—that self-giving, holy Love which is Perfect Being, and, as such, the source of the creation,—that which, in so far as it dwells in man, makes him a son of God, giving Him communion with the Father. So far as this *Love* dwells in us, God dwells in us and we in Him. What Jesus taught His disciples was that in the Spirit of Truth and Love they should have the indwelling of God Himself. The very purpose of the Gospel is to bring men into this spiritual communion of Love with God; and the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of God in the specifically Christian sense, is God as He thus dwells in men brought into reconciliation and fellowship with Himself through Christ. But we have something *more* in the Spirit of God as it comes to us in and through Jesus Christ. For—

*Secondly*, not only does the Holy Spirit bring to us the presence of God as Holy Love and Truth, and enable us to realise our fellowship with Him as our spiritual Father, it also brings to us the *personal presence of Christ* and of God as He has expressed Himself in Christ in a Divine-human personal form. The Holy Spirit thus becomes in us a sympathetic and helping Presence and Power—that "other Paraclete" of whom Christ spake, who was yet inseparable from Himself—coming to us not only in a Divine, but in a

Divine-human personal form. For, while God is with us in all Holy Love and in all Truth, and while He is personal in Himself, the Truth and Love that He is has expressed itself in a "bodily" form in that Divine-human Personality which was specially formed to be the Supreme Medium of the Divine Presence in the world. The actual, *personal* indwelling of God in man has only been realised *in Jesus Christ*, and it is in and through Him that God can most effectually come to us. This is the great advance in the Holy Spirit's manifestation in Christ, so great an advance as to be something new.

Yet this actual, personal (although spiritual) presence of *Christ*, although a prominent truth of the New Testament, and one of great practical importance, is ignored by many who would affirm the reality of "the Holy Spirit." It is very inadequately represented in our formal theology; indeed, it is left standing in an unreconciled and most tantalising relation to the doctrines of "God" and "the Holy Spirit," so that we have God and Christ and the Holy Spirit (as personal) given us in a way extremely difficult to harmonise. By modern Rationalism it is left out of account altogether. Christ, while He may have been the supreme Revelation of God, is but a fleeting manifestation—a flash of light which illuminates the world for a little while, and then disappears we know not whither. We follow Him with reverent feet to the Cross and to the Sepulchre, but beyond these we ask for the personal, living Christ in vain. His Spirit, in its impersonal influences (in some measure), lives on; but where is He Himself? Our unbelief here deadens for us in a very large measure even the impersonal influences of His Spirit. These cannot live and operate in their full Divine power apart from the living Christ Himself. If we separate the Spirit of Christ from Christ Himself, we get something all too vague and uncertain to influence and determine life. It is our unbelief

here that has so darkened the world for us, and impoverished our inner life—

“While we believed, on earth He went  
And open stood His grave;  
Men called from chamber, church, and tent,  
And Christ was by to save.  
Now He is dead. . . .”

But He is dead only to our unbelief, and it is just in the recovery of this faith in *the living presence of Christ* that we can get out of our darkness and depression, and the end be realised that was in vision indicated to the sad but true Poet of this transition period—

“One common wave of thought and joy  
Lifting mankind again.”<sup>1</sup>

And the fact that so many modern philosophical explanations of Christianity leave this element so largely or entirely out of account, shows how sadly they have failed to grasp the full significance of Christianity, and how far from true they are to Christian fact and experience. For, next to the fact of the Spirit itself, and inseparable, indeed, from that fact, nothing is so prominent in the New Testament, as something new and peculiar to Christianity, as the consciousness of the actual, personal, helping, and saving presence of Christ. This is something quite new and distinctive of Christianity, not only as compared with the great Ethnic religions, but with the Old Testament itself. It is really just in this that the Christian doctrine of the Spirit culminates. If we stop short of this we do not find that which is adequate to meet our needs. We may recognise in Christ the Revealer—in some measure, but we do not find in Him the living Saviour. Nay, we stop short of the full *revelation* that is made in Him, and do not find the Father as He comes and gives Himself to us in His Son.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, ‘Obermann once more.’

EVIDENCE OF THE PERSONAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST  
IN THE SPIRIT

The fact that, associated with those influences of the Holy Spirit which formed the distinctive feature of Christianity, and inseparable therefrom, were experiences of a personal presence and action, believed to be those of Christ, is so important that we must devote a few pages to its exhibition. We might fill many pages, indeed, with the proof, but we have only to read the New Testament in even the most cursory manner to see how prominent this fact is, and how strongly convinced the first Christians were that Christ was in some real sense actually present with them.

How deep was Paul's conviction that he had received his call, not through any man, but directly through the risen Christ Himself, receiving his gospel "through revelation of Jesus Christ," who had personally "apprehended him" (Gal. i. 1, 11, 12; Rom. i. 4, 5; [Phil. iii. 13]); how firmly he believed that Christ was working through him, "by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. xv. 18, 19); that He was guiding him by His counsel, sustaining him by His grace, answering his cry for help, making His "grace sufficient for him," and "perfecting His strength" in His servant's weakness (2 Cor. xii. 8-10). Paul held himself to be the devoted slave of Christ, the personal Lord and Master (Rom. i. 1; Gal. vi. 17, etc.), and even his innermost life he lived "by faith in the Son of God"; yea, it was not he that lived, but "Christ who lived in him" (Gal. ii. 20). If it be said that Paul was peculiarly constituted, so that he had trances and saw visions and believed that he had actually *seen* Christ, this only proves that he was, as he believed himself to be, "a chosen vessel from his mother's womb," in whom "the Lord could show

forth His power," and, as it were, bridge over the gulf between His presence in the flesh and His purely spiritual presence. But it was not to Paul alone that this consciousness of the real presence of Christ belonged, but to all Christians. What was true for him in *spiritual* things was true for all who fulfilled the required conditions. If our "reconciliation" was effected through the death of Christ, our "salvation" depended on "His life" (Rom. v. 10); and, "if we have become united with the likeness of His death, so we shall be also with His resurrection" (vi. 5). The Christian life, indeed, is realised through a vital union with Christ: "who ever liveth unto God," and over whom Death in no form has any more power (vi. 8-10). The Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of Christ, and to have that Spirit in us is the same thing as to have "Christ" in us (viii. 9, 10). Christ is the living "Lord" on whom men "should call and be saved" (x. 13, 14); the "Lord both of the dead and the living," who had "power to make His servants stand," and whose they were, whether they died or lived (xiv. 4, 9). Again, Christians were in every place "those that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. i. 2), from whom, as well as from the Father, Paul, in all his Epistles, wishes his readers "Grace and Peace." The Church was the Body of which Christ was the Head and to which He was the Source of spiritual life (Rom. xii. 4; 1 Cor. xii. 12, etc.). If in one place he asks, "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" ("the Holy Spirit which ye have from God," 1 Cor. vi. 19) (1 Cor. iii. 16); in another place it is, "Know ye not as to your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate" (2 Cor. xiii. 5). Where he speaks of the knowledge of the things of God, given them through the Spirit, he asks, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" and answers, "but we have the

mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16). Christ's indwelling is clearly implied where he speaks of "the body as being for the Lord and the Lord for the body," and of our members as being "the members of Christ"; yea, he says, "he that is joined to the Lord is *one Spirit*" (vi. 13-17). "The last Adam," he teaches expressly, "became *a quickening Spirit*" (xv. 45); and, speaking of the new dispensation of the Spirit, he says, "Now *the Lord is the Spirit* (of the O.T.): and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii. 17). And, again, "We all with unveiled face reflecting as (or beholding as in) a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (iii. 18), or "the Spirit *which is the Lord*." (Perhaps this passage should be rendered "the Lord *of* the Spirit"—a striking phrase, but quite in keeping with the thought that the Spirit had been "given" to Christ, who administered it.) So, in another connection, he declares that *Christ* was to them the wisdom of God and the power of God, "made to them of God," not only "righteousness" but "sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 24, 30). Christ was even then amongst them judging and chastening (xi. 32). They had been baptized, he says, not for a dead but for a living Christ, who had been raised up by God and was now reigning till all enemies should be placed under His feet (xv. 20-29). Christ was thus clearly recognised as present and working in and with those who believed. He works in or by the Holy Spirit, and, in some of the passages we have quoted, He is identified with the Spirit. In one word, Christ was to Paul a new Divine Head of Humanity the Source of the new spiritual and eternal life of the sons of God, which was realised through union with Himself. In *Acts* (i. 2) it is said that Jesus gave His apostles commandment "through the Holy Spirit," and in *Revelation* the messages of the Spirit to

the Churches came to the Seer directly from the living Christ.

So, if we turn to *the Gospels*, we find, even in the Synoptists, the promise, "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20); and the assurance, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (or age) (xxviii. 20). And again, while we have in one Gospel, "the Spirit of your Father speaketh in you" (Matt. x. 20), in another we have, "*I* will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay" (Luke xxi. 15).

In the Fourth Gospel, where so much is said concerning the Spirit, we see that its coming depended on the glorification of Christ (John vii. 39), and in His great discourse to His disciples Christ plainly associates the coming of the Spirit with His own spiritual coming to them: "I will not leave you desolate (or orphans): I come unto you. Yet a little while, and *the world* beholdeth Me no more; but ye behold Me: because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall *know* that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and *I in you*.—He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him" (xiv. 19–21). And again, "If a man love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and *we will come unto him*, and make our abode with him" (xiv. 23). Again, while it is "the Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send in His name," He adds immediately: "Let not your heart be troubled—I go away, and *I come unto you*" (xiv. 27, 28). While it is "the Spirit of Truth that proceedeth from the Father," yet it is the Spirit "whom *I will send unto you from the Father*" (xv. 26). That Spirit could not come unless He left them in the flesh: "It is expedient for you that I go away (to the Father, who is greater, and from whom, therefore, or through whose

power, the new spiritual presence should come): for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you" (xvi. 7, 8). Through that Spirit, they should "see Him again *because* He went to the Father"; yea, His going away would be but the necessary prelude to the fulness of their joy in His "seeing them again"—a joy no man could take from them (xvi. 16, 22). They should also do "greater works" than He did, "*because* He went to the Father" (xiv. 12), and, it is implied, sent or came unto them again in the power of the Spirit of the Father. Here we have the coming of the Spirit clearly identified with His own coming again in Spirit. In this Gospel we have also strongly emphasised the necessity for personal union with Himself as the life of our spirits: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father; even so he that eateth Me, he also shall live because of Me" (vi. 53, 57). "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one" (xvii. 23). Just a different form of statement of that vital union with Christ so strongly insisted on by Paul. And again, "In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you" (xiv. 20).

We are led, therefore, by all these passages (and more might be quoted) to regard the coming of the Holy Spirit in Christianity as including the real, personal, though spiritual coming again of Christ to "dwell in our hearts through faith," and to be within us the Spirit and power of that life of Divine Sonship which He realised in our name.

#### RELATION OF CHRIST TO THE SPIRIT

We do not say (as Beyschlag seems to do, while he yet leaves some important points uncertain) that "the Holy

Spirit" is simply identical with the risen and exalted Christ. That conception of the Spirit seems inadequate, and will not agree with the place given to it in the Old Testament, nor with Christ's own language respecting it, nor with much that Paul says, especially when he speaks of the Spirit as "searching all things, even the deep things of God." In the same sense in which our Lord said, "the Father is greater than I," "the Spirit" is a *wider* term than "Christ" historically viewed, and it proceeds from *both* the Father and the Son. The truth is, rather, so far at least, not that the Spirit is identical with Christ, but that it was from the first so entirely the principle of His personality, and He was throughout so completely one with it in His Divine Humanity that He became its perfect organ and expression, not merely in a temporal and impersonal sense, but in a personal and abiding manner; or, viewed from the Divine side, that God through the Spirit, fully incarnated Himself in Christ in a permanent Divine-human Personality. The Holy Spirit as it comes to us in Christianity, therefore, *includes* the personal presence of Christ.

This, moreover, naturally follows from the representations which we have in the Gospels of Christ's personal life in relation to the Spirit. In His life He was *one* with "the Spirit" or "the Father" that dwelt in Him—"I and the Father are one" (see also Matt. xiii. 31, 32). And, when He had put off the flesh, what remained? Can we believe there was nothing save impersonal influences, precious as these are? Was the personal life of the "strong Son of God" blotted out by His cruel foes on the Cross for ever? Of what lasting good then would the impersonal influences that come from Him be? For, if *He* was blotted out of personal existence, much more shall we all be; eternal life is a dream, and the time will come when God shall have nothing left as the fruit of all His love and travail in His creation; there will be but an

eternal round of birth and death, of promise and failure, with no ultimate or rational meaning in it all. This would be the *reductio ad absurdum*, not of an argument merely, but of the universe itself. We might then bid farewell to all thought of Reality in God or of Rationality in His work. What remained then when Jesus put off the flesh? What but *Himself* in His perfect unity with God and identity with the Spirit that had dwelt all along, not in His body as a shell, but in His spirit as a Shrine or Organ which it had made wholly its own, and in which, in its Divine Humanity, the Spirit (and God in that Spirit) can come to dwell in us all *in a new, personal, Divine-human form*. Or, to view the question on its Divine side, that which remained was God as He had expressed His life in Christ in Divine-human personal form. In other words, it is not merely the impersonal influences that stream from the Divine manifestation in Christ that constitute "the Spirit" as it comes to us through Him, but the *whole* of that manifestation, including the *personality* in which God was incarnated and through which the Spirit was manifested. The personality of Christ is inseparable from the Spirit, which means, of course, that it is inseparable from God. This results from the perfect unity of Christ with God. When the continued influence of Christ is accounted for by saying (as Dr. Edward Caird does in his Gifford Lectures on *The Evolution of Religion*) that faith identified His personality with the *principle* He realised, it comes to this, that faith grasped that which was the actual fact. For it was just the fact that the Personality of Christ did realise the principle of the absolute religion that gave Him His supreme influence; it really means that Christ was in His inmost self one with the Spirit, or with God, and is, therefore, "alive for evermore"; in the Spirit He is for ever that which He was manifested in the world as being.

Thus Christ becomes, verily, that "last Adam" who

was made a "quickening Spirit," the Head of a new Humanity born into the true and eternal life of the Spirit, which is the life of the sons of God, or the very life of God in man. He is the Lord who, realising in Himself the perfect truth of all that was aimed at in the old dispensation,—the perfect truth of man's life as a son of God and of God's life in man,—"is (Himself) the Spirit," able to "change us into the same image from glory unto glory"; the Lord in whom the ever-working Spirit of God shone forth in transcendent glory in a human "image of God," to become in a new and fuller sense a Spirit of life and of grace to men; the personal Lord, who can dispense His grace to us according to our need, who can, to use Paul's beautiful figure, "spread His power as a tabernacle over us, making His grace sufficient for us, and perfecting His strength in our weakness."

### *The Early Christian View*

We do not mean to say that the first Christians always clearly apprehended this spiritual presence of Christ as one with that of the Holy Spirit. Their beliefs necessarily ran in the moulds of their Jewish training, and they could, without any departure from their Monotheism, or any sense of the difficulty we experience, speak freely of God and of the Spirit and of Christ as personal presences with them. They had certain experiences, and they interpreted these in the way most natural to them. Paul probably thought of the Spirit as being in some form a personal Presence coming forth from God, although it was also to him the Spirit of Christ and equivalent to "Christ." His modes of speech are best explained as the result of the combination of his new Christian experience with his Jewish beliefs. Careful study of the New Testament leads to the conviction that, in one important aspect, it was in and through *Christ* that

both God and the Spirit *as personal* were present to their new Christian consciousness.

This is implied in the ruling New Testament conception that it was *Christ* who had sent forth the Spirit which He had received of the Father. When we read of Christ as rising from the dead, as being exalted to the right hand of God and sitting there, and as having received of the Father the promised Spirit which He "sent down," or "poured out," we are surely not to interpret such language merely *literally*, but spiritually and truly. It does not mean that Christ *rose up* in some outward way to a position elevated in space and exalted above the earth, so that He, in some way, entirely *left* the world of our humanity; but that He, in that humanity which became in Him one with God, passed wholly into the Divine life—"the manhood," so "taken into the Godhead" as to give Him full participation in that infinite life of God which is the life of Spirit, and so that He, as a spiritual Divine and human Personality, is present and working everywhere. The Spirit became His, not by any outward gift, but by personal possession. When He put off the flesh, His spirit did not *go away* somewhere, but became free to be present everywhere, and, as one with the Holy Spirit, to become that indwelling Spirit which He promised to His disciples, and, which, as the complete expression of the life of God in human form, becomes the Spirit of the new life in our hearts; in the words of Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "He who first descended (into Hades), ascended far above all Heavens, that He might fill all things." The first disciples might understand all this in the sense of local movement; but for *us* to continue to do so is to materialise spiritual truth so as to be in danger of losing it altogether. Through their way of viewing Jesus as the exalted *Christ* and "the Holy Spirit" as something that could be "sent forth" or "poured out," they were able to realise the actual presence and working

of Christ as the Lord of the Church, the Giver of Grace, the doer of mighty works "through the Holy Spirit"; but we, if we would realise and still hold fast the truth, must leave behind us all these external views, and see in the Holy Spirit of Christianity that Spirit of God, indeed, through which we are brought into communion with the Father; but also the Spirit as it comes to us in the Person of that Christ, who was the complete expression of God in human form, and, as such, the personal Spirit of the new life in our humanity—the present Teacher, Helper, Saviour our hearts cry out for.

Or, we may put it in this way. The first Christians were certainly conscious of *some* Divine power working in and through them; it was Truth and Love; but it was more; it made itself felt within them as a veritable "power of God," the working of Him who wrought in them mightily, and who was "able to do for them far above all they could ask or think." According to their way of thinking of Divine things, they naturally ascribed this power to "God," to "the Holy Spirit," and to "Christ." But were there *three* personal Agents operating thus within them? Must we not rather say that, while all was *of* God and *in* the Holy Spirit, it was all *through* Christ as the Son of God in Divine-human form, the living expression and personal organ of the Divine Spirit. This is indeed just what Paul does say when he speaks in 1 Cor. xii. 4–6 of one God who works all things in all; one Spirit in which all is wrought, and one Lord who administers that Spirit. Unless we are to suppose three Divine Agents, all at the same moment, and yet each one separately, acting on Christians to the same end, we must rise to a conception which will resolve the three into a unity of action; and this we have in the formula already quoted—all *of* God, *in* the Spirit, and *through* Christ. We must therefore regard the Holy Spirit in Christianity (taken as

Personal) as being, in one aspect, the Spirit of God Himself coming to men in and through Jesus Christ, who is not to be thought of as being merely a fleeting expression of that Spirit in the flesh, but as an enduring Divine and human Personality—the Spirit's great work in the world, its abiding personal organ, in whom we find God present with us in our life, as He has expressed His Being and conditioned His Grace in this Divine-human form. God has expressed His inmost life in Jesus Christ, and is present with us, not only in the ethical influences that flow from Christ, and as the Infinite Spirit of Truth and Love, but also in that Divine-human Personality of Christ. God in Him has entered our Humanity in quite a new way.

The Holy Spirit in Christianity, therefore, *includes* the personal, spiritual presence of Christ (and of God in Him), so that He is able to give us (in entire harmony with our moral freedom) "grace to help in time of need," teaching and guidance, and all that we require to strengthen us in our spiritual life and to fit us for His service; leading us also into the consciousness of fellowship with Himself and with the Father. The Holy Spirit that He promised His disciples was to be not only the Spirit of Truth, but "the Paraclete"—their abiding Advocate, Counsellor, Comforter and Strengthener, who should be to them all that He had been to them in the flesh, and even more than He had been to them under fleshly limitations. It is thus that we can understand how it is that the Holy Spirit is *personal* in the New Testament as distinguished from the Old. To the question, why it should be *through Christ* that we thus receive the Spirit and experience fellowship with God, we shall yet have to devote our attention; but, meanwhile, we would repeat that this faith in, and experience of, the personal presence and grace of Christ and of God in Him, whether intellectually understood or not, has been a constant element in Christian experience. We do not refer to those who, in

the face of the plainest Scripture testimony, speak as if there were no God but "Christ," nor of such as might be accounted the weaklings of the race; but the strongest men naturally, and the firmest believers in God, and at the same time the most influential Christians, have found God with them in a special manner in Jesus Christ. They have proved the truth of the words, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches; without Me ye can do nothing"; "the Father in Me, and I in you." Without His personal presence with them, they have felt themselves to be indeed like "desolate orphans," weak and lonely, destitute of the consciousness of God's personal presence, and altogether insufficient for the life and work set before them. They had no comfort save in looking to Him who had promised to be with them always, and through whom they found themselves in communion with the Father also. They had no strength or hope of success save through Him to whom they could speak, as did Paul to his Lord, and from whom they could receive the same gracious assurances. We repeat that it has been the very strongest men "naturally" who have had such experience. We see it, not only in Paul and his fellow-apostles, but in Wickliffe, as the apostle of spiritual Christianity in England; in Luther, in his "battles for the free" against the most terrible odds; in John Hus, in his filthy dungeon at Constance; in Oliver Cromwell in his sorrows, finding his "very life saved" by the thought, "He that was Paul's Christ is my Christ too!" in David Livingstone, toiling through the African morasses, well-nigh spent, but struggling on, with his only support in the assurance of Him "whose word was that of a perfect Gentleman," and who had said, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And if it was thus with those heroes of the faith, how much must that Presence be to the average Christian, and to those of weaker "natural" constitution. To take away the personal presence of

Christ from such is to take away their all. Under stress of intellectual difficulties we may feel compelled to view the matter in some other way, and to substitute for the personal presence of Christ that of God in Himself, or of the Holy Spirit differently conceived. We may think that, although we have dispensed with the personal presence of Christ, we have conserved all that is essential in Christianity, and perhaps even that, in the restoration of a more immediate faith in the Father Himself, we have found something better. But we discover in experience that it is not so; but that (whatever exceptional experiences exceptionally constituted or situated natures may have) what the Christian apostle said, drawn from experience in the early days, is still true: "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also" (1 John ii. 23, R.V.). As long as we believe in, and live in union with, the living Christ the Saviour, we can maintain our faith in God, and have the consciousness of the Father's presence with us; when we let go our hold on the personal Christ, and think to live by what may seem a more direct and immediate faith in God, our faith in God begins to be shaken, and the experience of the Divine presence with us fades out of our consciousness. Why this should be so must now more fully engage our attention.

Meanwhile, we may sum up what we have seen by saying that the Holy Spirit, as the distinctive and abiding Reality in Christianity, is—

1. The Spirit of God, the very essence of the Divine life, by which our Heavenly Father brings us into communion with Himself and imparts His Gracious Presence unto us.

2. While one with the Divine Spirit in all its manifestations and workings, immanent and transcendent, it is *distinctively* that Spirit as it comes to us through the whole life and teaching, work and personality of Jesus Christ (in

whom the Spirit found its fullest expression and manifestation) for our salvation or uplifting into the life of the sons of God.

3. In Itself, it is always an ethical Spirit of Holy Love, finding its expression in the Truth—above all, in the Truth concerning God in Christ; becoming also within us, as it possesses us, an illuminating, helping, sanctifying, strengthening, and saving Spirit.

4. It is the Spirit of Christ as truly as of God—as inseparable from Christ as it is from God—bringing to us the living, personal presence of Christ (and of God in Him) as our Lord and Friend and Saviour who in that Spirit works in and through His disciples. As the Spirit found its highest expression in the world in the personal Christ, in whom God was dwelling in a Divine-human Personality, so it is in Him that the Holy Spirit comes to us in that personal form and working which distinguish it in Christianity—at once the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, but coming to us in this Divine-human form through that Son of God and Son of man in whom the Spirit has entered into full possession of our humanity. “His glorified Humanity is the very home and temple of the Spirit of God” (Dale, *Christian Doctrine*, p. 146).

It is sometimes asked by those who recognise that in Christianity the Spirit is given “in a manner greatly excelling in value the experience of Old Testament saints, or that of any to whom Jesus has not been made known” (Dr. Robertson, *Our Lord's Teaching*, p. 109; see also Dale's *Christian Doctrine*, which particularly recognises the now personal presence of the Spirit), why this should be so dependent on Jesus and on His glorification. Are not the chief reasons manifest in what we have had before us? The Spirit, in order to go forth in the fulness of its ethical power, needed first to be manifested; and in order to come

in the fulness of personal expression to us and to dwell in us, it needed to find such a complete organ as it did find in the Humanity of Christ.<sup>1</sup> But to the question, "Why through Christ?" we must now address ourselves from other points of view as well, and we have still to seek a completer conception of the Spirit in its relation to God, to Christ, and to ourselves.

<sup>1</sup> That it is only in Christianity we have the distinct revelation of the Holy Spirit as personal is widely acknowledged. See, e.g., articles on 'God' and 'Holy Spirit,' by Dr. Sanday and Dr. Swete, in *The Dictionary of the Bible*. Sometimes this is accounted for by a reference to the teachings of Christ in the Fourth Gospel. But there must be some reason for it apart from the *teachings* of Christ merely. Christ did not just *tell* His disciples that there was this third Person in the Godhead, who had hitherto been unrevealed as a Person. The reason must have reference to the Person and Work of Christ. The question why it is only in Christianity that the Holy Spirit is revealed as personal, ought to be more deeply pondered than it has been. We have sought to answer it in the light of the materials which the New Testament Scriptures afford us.

## CHAPTER V

### WHY THROUGH CHRIST?

#### I. REVELATION

*Christ made unto us “Wisdom” from God*

THE conclusions we have been led to are that the Holy Spirit is the great and distinctive thing in Christianity—that through which we find God as He communicates Himself to us, and have God dwelling in us; but that this Spirit comes to us *through Christ*, and includes the personal presence, and indwelling of Christ, and that grace and help of God in Him by which we are enabled to live in union with God and to realise our life toward Him as His children. We have now to meet the question, Why it should be *through Christ* we thus find God and experience the helping grace of God?

This question indicates what is a serious difficulty with many, and it is pressed upon us by those who are unable to hold the evangelical faith. Why should it be only through Christ we *so* find God and the helping grace of God? Does not, it is asked, this looking to the personal Christ place something between our souls and God, or at least weaken our hold on the great fundamental truth of the Fatherhood of God, and our direct and immediate relation to Him as our Father? If God be the Heavenly Father, for ever near to every man, and willing to impart His Spirit to all, as Christ taught, why should we need

Christ to stand, as it would seem, between us and that Father? Are we not in this falling away from the simple and beautiful teaching of Jesus Himself into the intricacies of a theological system created by men who, whether Jewish or Greek, had far inferior beliefs concerning God to those of Christ?

*The Christian Answer*

We shall not at this stage attempt to give any speculative answer to these questions. Only premising that the reality of the Divine Fatherhood and the nearness of God the Infinite Spirit to each human being (which was the distinct teaching of Christ, and is the very ground of all religion) must be held fast,—while at the same time we remember that it is as *Spirit* and as *Holy Spirit* that God is so near,—we shall again turn to the *distinctively Christian answer* as we find it, clearly and with one consent, given in those earliest and most authentic Christian writings we have already had before us. Having seen what that answer is, we shall then ask whether it does not still hold good. It is our duty, in the first place at least, to seek to know and fairly consider the answer that is given in those earliest records of Christian life and experience. If we go again to these, we shall find that it turns upon both the *work of Christ* on our behalf and the nature of His *Person* in relation to God and to ourselves; leading up to the relation of “the Holy Spirit” to both God and Christ. This will have been already, so far at least, apparent from the passages adduced referring to the gift of the Spirit, so that we need not again quote these and similar passages in detail. We may simply sum up the teaching of Paul, and of the New Testament generally, by saying that in the fulness of time God revealed Himself in Christ “His own Son,” and through His work on our behalf so reconciled the sinful world unto Himself that He could accept men as

His sons, and impart the fulness of His Spirit unto them. Without staying to present further proof of this, which we believe will not be seriously disputed as a summary representation of the apostolic teaching, let us proceed at once to consider—(1) whether this doctrine of Redemption through Christ is grounded on a real need on man's part, and an equally real meeting of that need on the part of God? and (2) what are its implications concerning the person of Christ, viewing this subject in the light of the whole teaching of the New Testament concerning Him? We shall thus also probably be led to a clearer understanding of the Holy Spirit in relation to both God and Christ, as well as to ourselves.

According to Paul (1 Cor. i. 30) and the New Testament generally, God has given us in Christ these three things: "Wisdom," that is Revelation or Knowledge; (2) "Righteousness," that is Reconciliation or Acceptance with Himself; and (3) "Sanctification," implying the indwelling and grace of the Holy Spirit; the whole culminating in complete and eternal "Redemption" as the sons and heirs of God.

#### REVELATION

Let us take first the necessity for knowledge, or *Revelation*. Manifestly, if Religion consists in communion with God, or in a loving relation to God, we need to know God, and to know Him so as to be led to love Him. We cannot really love or worship an unknown God. But where are we to get such knowledge of God? *We can know nothing of Him save as He reveals Himself.* We can only get knowledge of God through His works and manifestations reflected in our rational and moral nature. Nature is, so far, a revelation of God; Nature reveals Him as the Infinite Reason. We cannot doubt for a moment that it is Reason that is working in Nature at every point. But

Nature cannot reveal the *moral qualities* of God, for the simple reason that it is not moral till man is reached. Man has had developed in him a moral nature, but he is imperfect, not to say sinful, so that a perfect revelation of God cannot be given either in nature or in ordinary man. Through his experience in the world, man may be said to have come (in his highest representatives, but in them only, to believe in God as the Absolute Righteousness. To this the developed conscience witnesses; but where shall the knowledge of God as *Love*, or as the personal Father of men, be found? His Providential acts in relation to Israel revealed Him in a special gracious relation to that people; but their later history seemed to contradict it all again. The knowledge of God gained by the best in that nation, moreover, pointed them on to a fuller manifestation of Himself in relation to all men in His highest ethical qualities and in His nearest personal indwelling. If we go to the history of the nations outside of Israel, no one who reads that history can doubt the truth of Paul's famous saying, "the world through its wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. i. 21), or that of his other declaration that the mass of men had come lamentably short of, or, rather, even fallen back from, such knowledge of God as they might have had (Rom. i. 21). Philosophy amongst the Greeks had gone a certain length; then it could go no further, but was sinking back into scepticism and decay, and even when at its best, as is well known, the masses of men and women in the world were never greatly influenced by it. It was doing a strictly *preparatory* work, like "the law" in Israel. All will acknowledge, at least, that, as matter of history, God, in the full ethical truth of His Fatherhood and in the certainty of His Love, was not known till He was revealed in Christ, not by "words of wisdom" or by teaching concerning Him merely, but, above all, by His great *deed* in Christ—by His self-revelation in the life of Christ and in His self-sacrific-

ing death on the Cross. Explain it as we may, it is an absolutely certain fact that in Christ men saw God and knew God as they had never seen and known Him before, so that they could joyfully say, "the darkness is past and the true light shineth," and be led to take up in love a filial attitude towards God, and to manifest its reality by seeking supremely the things of God—the things of a new life devoted to Truth and Love and Righteousness.

Is it in anywise different at the present moment? Can men, apart from His self-revelation in Christ, gain a satisfying and sufficient knowledge of God? We need not point to the heathen nations; but, if God be so easily found as some would have us believe, why is He not found by His children all over the world, many of them crying aloud in their misery and degradation and yet left to sit and groan under superstition and tyranny, and to cry and "stretch lame hands" out into the darkness, all in vain. There must be some *reason* why they should be left like this—some reason in harmony with the infinite goodness that God must be. And what reason can we find than just this: that, although God as the Infinite Spirit is "near us ever," it is *as Spirit* He is near, and that His revelation of Himself and actual entrance into and manifestation in our life must, in the nature of things, be progressive, and that it was *this last* that attained its culmination in Christ.

If, turning from "the dark places of the earth," we go to the representatives of the world's light and wisdom, do we find that they can reach any real and sufficient *knowledge* of God, apart from His supreme revelation of Himself in Christ? Do we not find, instead, just the same uncertainties, the same difficulties (although perhaps in different form), and the same contradictions that characterised the wisest men of old? Do not some, professing to be wise above all others, tell us that God is but a name or a dream, perchance an evil dream? Do not others assure us that, if

there be a God, our limited faculties can never know Him ; that He must be for ever the great Unknown and Unknowable ? Is He not, with some, merely the Soul of the world ? Are not the arguments built up by one set of Theistic reasoners laboriously pulled down by another set, in order that they may build arguments of their own on the ruins, to be speedily pulled down again by another set of reasoners ? What real and abiding *certainty* concerning the highest attributes of God—His Personality and His Love—is to be found through all this argumentation ? It is good and strong while it is before us, but, when we look away, it seems to leave us, and our difficulties return with undiminished force when we view the actual facts of the world. Not by argument can we find God, but only through some adequate *manifestation*, apart from which all our reasoning is in the air. We have many earnest Theists indeed who do not accept the specifically Christian conception of Christ, and who seem satisfied with their own reasonings, which are, undoubtedly, often strong and helpful ; but let them carefully put out of their systems everything derived from that special revelation of God in Christ that Christianity affirms, and how much would be left to them of that which man most needs to know ? Did not the late justly revered Dr. Martineau, himself the most eminent of nineteenth century Theists, tell us that the God whom Christian Theists worship as the Father is really clothed with those attributes which Christian faith has seen revealed in “the Son” ? How else, indeed, has the God and Father of Christian Theists become known to them ?

It is not concerning the Being of God, as the Eternal Power and Reason, we are in difficulty, but concerning His Personality and His Love. We are sure that there is *some* Power, some Being, some ultimate Reality, who is, so far at least, manifested in nature around us ; but can we find a

satisfying vision of that Being anywhere save in His great and crowning work in Christ? We are confident there is a Universal and Eternal Reason manifesting itself in all things, apart from the reality of which neither Science nor anything that can be called knowledge, nor the ordered world itself, would be possible; it *seems* certain also that the perfect Reason must be, at the same time, the perfect Love, which belief is strengthened by the evolution of morality, with its supreme imperative of Love; but do we feel equally certain that this Eternal Reason, which we would fain think must also be Eternal Love, is a personal Being into real communion with whom we can come? Nay, can we, in view of the actual world, so full of sorrow, suffering, and sin, the product in fact of ages of conflict and pain to its inhabitants,—for the proof of which we do not need to go back to prehistoric evolutionary periods, the real significance of which might be questioned, but may confine ourselves to the only too well-marked historic periods,—a world in which we see no Divine intervention, even where our reason would say there was the sorest need,—a world where sin and treachery and all manner of cruelty and oppression are suffered to work their vilest work untouched,—a world where all, good and bad alike, seem at length to go down into the unrelieved darkness of death,—we ask in all seriousness, can we, in view of all this, apart from God's self-revelation in Christ, have the certitude that He who is the Source of the life of all these labouring worlds is really a *Love* that sympathises with us and cares for us? Is it not just, above all things, a revelation of God as Love and of His personal presence in the world that we so greatly need in view of the problems that press upon us in even this nineteenth century; yea, that press upon us harder than ever they pressed on men before, just because the social and sympathetic feelings have been developed to quite a new sensitiveness in the presence of

sorrow, suffering, and death? And is not the turning of our eyes away from that Revelation the secret of that apathy which, like a flooding of *Lethic*, seems now, in these latest years, in danger of coming down upon us and overwhelming our manhood and womanhood? And, even supposing we could reach a satisfactory *belief* concerning God, where shall we see Him and find Him in his personal presence so as to be sure He is there? Is not the cry of the human heart still, “*Show us the Father and it sufficeth us*”?

“Where shall I find Him, O my Soul,  
Who yet is everywhere?”

We cannot cheat ourselves to-day with words and comforting beliefs which we do not see to be founded in fact—

“Doubts to the world’s child-heart unknown  
Question us now from star and stone;  
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.  
The power is lost to self-deceive  
With hollow forms of make-believe;  
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.  
Still struggles in the ages’ breast  
With deepening agony of quest  
The old entreaty—Art thou He?”<sup>1</sup>

And, apart from *Him*, we cannot get a satisfying answer.

It has become common to speak of the *immanence* of God in Nature and in man, as if that were sufficient, apart from seeing the culminating revelation of that immanence in Jesus Christ. There is a profound truth in the idea of the Divine immanence, and many, no doubt, have found refuge in it when all else seemed crumbling away, and faith in the transcendent Deity of their childhood had become impossible. But we cannot rest permanently in it, as commonly taken; it does not go far enough, and cannot permanently satisfy. There are questions to which the common idea of the immanence of God affords no answer, and the whole subject calls for more thorough consideration

<sup>1</sup> Whittier’s ‘The Meeting.’

than it has received. The phrase "the immanence of *God*" is, indeed, in some respects a misleading one. Where, we cannot but ask ourselves, do we in truth see this immanence of *God* till, following the Divine order of development, we come to Jesus Christ? Doubtless the idea and potency of the world's development have always been there in some form; there has ever been so much, if we may so speak, of the Divine Reason and Power working in Nature, conditioned in various forms and forces, but where do we see *God*—what the Intellect and Heart mean by and seek as *God*? Can we think of *God* as being verily *in* the cosmic vapour, or the whirling fiery ball, or the developing organic world, where the

" . . . Dragons of the prime  
. . . tare each other in their slime?"

No; surely we cannot see *God* there. There is some measure of Divine Power working in Nature to-day; but, surely, if we read the record of the terrible things that are for ever happening in Nature, or see them with our own eyes, it is not a personal God that we behold therein. As Huxley most truly said, what we witness in Nature is the working of a perfectly "logical machine," but there is no regard for individuals nor such action as we can for a moment deem personal. So, again, there is a measure of the Divine Reason, of the Divine Spirit, in man; but, certainly, the blood-stained pages of human history, the terrible record of wrong and oppression—of "man's inhumanity to man, making countless thousands mourn," and the actual life of men and women in the world to-day, do not show the immanence of a personal God of Love. The immanence of *God* in the world was, in one aspect, a *growing* reality, and it only reached its culmination in Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For fuller treatment of the Divine Immanence, see Part III. chap. vii.

We may, it is true, endeavour to lift our faith above all this and seek to enter into communion with the transcendent Deity whose Presence *over* it all we believe in—the Eternal Source of our being, the Infinite Reason and Love. But do we really find thus all that we seek and need? Is it not the case that, confident as we may feel at times, our faith, apart from the living Christ, is so exposed to shock that it can only be maintained by a constant process of reasoning and argumentation? Are we not tortured ever and again by the questions—Whether God can be really seen to be Love? whether He is a living God, and a personal Being such as we can hold communion with? whether we are not living in a beautiful dream broken by moments of rude awakening? whether we are not worshipping an *idea* of God, rather than coming into fellowship with a personal Presence, or finding a helping Power we can know to be transcendent? While it is true that we are in fellowship with God in so far as His Spirit of Truth and Love and Holiness possesses us (and it is only thus anyone can be in real communion with God in His ethical truth), in how many men has that Spirit so dwelt as to constitute a *real personal presence and indwelling of God* within them? Has this ever been realised by anyone save Jesus Christ? While we earnestly maintain the Supreme Reality of God, we must take Him as He reveals Himself and comes into communion with us.

Without doubt, all is of God. God Himself is in a true sense, as has been said, “the substance of each man’s soul,” the Eternal Reason, Righteousness, and Love that is all around us, and He is making Himself felt within us by the Ideals which He causes to arise to command us and draw us after them;<sup>1</sup> no doubt also God cannot be *really* separated from any creature or from any atom, but is the all-embracing, never-slumbering, ever-active Consciousness

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Upton’s Hibbert Lectures on Theism.*

in which we live and move and have our being. Yet it is also true that, now as of old time in Palestine and in Greece, it is only a *few*—a very few—gifted natures (prophets) that can in any practical measure realise His Presence and live in communion with Him *so* conceived; whereas it is the very promise of “the new covenant” that that which only belonged in any measure to the few should be open in full measure unto all. Are there not in all men moral obstacles to the indwelling of God through these Ideals of Duty that need to be overcome; and, as a matter of history, has not religion, in spite of these gleams of high Divine Ideal, always tended to sink back into a Pantheistic view of the universe which has lost God therein, and from which it can only be restored by the Christian Faith?<sup>1</sup> And, while now that “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” has shone upon us, we may be able to formulate a Theistic faith, it is only in Christ that we see God really to be that Eternal Reason, Righteousness, and Love we believe He is.

We may say, indeed,—and it is profoundly true,—

“Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet; Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.”

But it is only in Christ that the Infinite Spirit has been so revealed, and it is only through Christ we can find that full and satisfying access to Him that our finite spirits, conscious of their sin and need and moral distance from Him, yearn for.

#### *The Barriers between Man and God*

Man has been always the object of God’s thought and care, and from the first was conceived in the Divine Idea as the son into communion of life with whom the great

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* D’Alviella’s Hibbert Lectures on *The Origin and Growth of the Conception of God* (Lecture V.).

Father-Spirit was to come, and in His Spirit to impart Himself; but it could only be through a *process* of development that this divinely-sought end could be realised. And, in addition to the necessity for a slow process of development, two barriers, the gospel affirms, came, in some way, to stand between man and God—*ignorance* and *sin*—not merely such ignorance and sin as might be deemed inevitable in the process of man's development, but such blame-worthy sin and ignorance as Paul points to in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, with a consequent loss of such knowledge of God, and of themselves in their truth, as men *might* have had, and an incapacity to rise into that life of fellowship with God and of Sonship toward Him, which must necessarily be, not physical merely, but ethical. It was this that involved the necessity for *Redemption*. And in Christ, not only did the process of development as the end of all God's working in Grace as well as in Nature reach its consummation, but, having so reached it in Him, through Him also the hindering ignorance and sin were removed, and the way opened for all to be brought nigh to God and raised to their destined life of sonship.

### 1. *The Revelation of God in Christ*

In Christ God has given a complete and permanent answer to our spirit's cry, meeting the wants not only of "them of old time," but, as it were, by anticipation, the deepest needs of ourselves in these latter days. He has spoken once for all in His Son, and both revealed and, as it were, given Himself to us, in and through Him for ever. In Jesus Christ, regarded as the revelation of God in human form, we see God with us in our human life, living His Divine life, not apart from the world of sin and suffering, but entering personally into it and manifestly revealed as

Love. In Christ we behold a Love higher than anything human, which shows itself superior to all that is merely of man, which rises above the finite self entirely, obtaining it in complete self-sacrifice, a Love revealed in a life which is lived moment by moment under the inspiration of "the Spirit of the Father," and which is therefore the expression of the life of *God* in man. We behold a Love, higher than anything earthly, which yet makes itself entirely human: which not only enters into and passes through all our suffering, but takes even our sin upon itself, and is willing to be itself "made sin" for our sakes. As Goethe has said, "The Divine can never be more Divine than that." Higher than that complete Self-sacrifice we can never go. If *that* was not God in man "in all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and as far as the Divine in its highest ethical nature can be expressed in the human, we may cease to speak, or rather to dream, of God. With the utmost confidence we can say that, if we do not see God *there*, we cannot see Him anywhere. True, it was in *man*, in all the weakness of humanity and under the limitations of the time and place of that particular man; but how else could God have appeared in *human* form? Any other kind of being would not have been man. The greater the limitations, the nearer does He come to us. And when, in due time, we see even the human life, made wholly one with the Divine Spirit that actuated it, raised above all limitations and, as a Divine-human life, transcending the seen and temporal, rising wholly into the Eternal and Divine, coming forth therefrom again, or continuing to operate from God, as the personal Spirit of true life to men, the final and convincing proof is given that we have here, not merely man, but God. For, what truer thought of God can we have than that of the Universal Spirit of Life; and when we see how Christ, as the manifestation of God, becomes the Spirit of our highest life, what clearer

proof can be given that it was God, and not man only, that was living and moving in Him? Thus, in and through Christ, God gives us that knowledge of Himself which we needed so much, and reveals His presence with us as Personal. In Christ He has entered our very life in an abiding personal form.

### *The Living Christ*

The revelation, however, would not be complete apart from *the living and abiding Christ*. If the Cross, so far as we knew, ended the personal life of Christ, how could we be sure that *God* was really in Him in a personal degree? If that life, wholly inspired by Love as it was, yet goes out in death as all other lives seem to do; if, for aught that appears in relation to the personal Christ, His malicious foes triumphed over Him on the Cross, must we not ask, whether there was really anything *more* manifested in Him than there has been, though in less measure, in other men who, inspired by the highest motives, have suffered an inexplicable martyrdom? We should see Truth and Love and Grace in Him far above the ordinary; but how could we know that God, and not merely man, was revealed there? Ending as He did on the Cross outwardly, we should have no evidence of *God* at all. But when we realise that that life has survived the death that *seems* at least to bring all other lives, however good, to an end; when we know that it lives on in power greater than it possessed in its earthly manifestation (although spiritual in its kind), we feel certain that what is revealed in that life is veritably a new and higher measure of the Power that conditions Itself in the life of the Universe that we call God. It proves itself to be such because it continues to operate as one with, and as an element in, the one all-inspiring, all-sustaining Spirit. A new Divine Presence

and Power, therefore, enters the world in Christ, even God Himself in abiding, Divine-human, personal form; not in contradiction of His Fatherhood, but as the fullest expression thereof.

## 2. *The Revelation of Man in Christ*

But, secondly, we needed, not only the revelation of God, but of *man* in his true relation to God and in his divinely-intended destiny.

This knowledge was as much hid from men as was the knowledge of God; and, apart from Christ, strange as it may seem, it is still beyond our reach. We may reason and speculate; we may hope and anticipate, but we have still as yet no certainty. God we may believe in; but what am *I* in relation to God? Duty we are certain claims us but what is my highest duty, my highest life? Some Destiny we surely have; but what is it? Who can penetrate the darkness of death and reveal what lies beyond, or tell us certainly if there is aught beyond?

It is in Christ alone that we have this revelation clearly given us. However exalted above ordinary men, Christ was truly *man*. Any theory of the Incarnation that destroys or darkens His true Humanity is certainly untrue to fact and to Christian experience. It is as *the Son of Man* Christ appears in our world, realising the true life of man, and therefore representing man in his relation to God, man as the son of God. In Him we see that the true life of man is to have God living in him. Not only does He in His teaching hold up as the Ideal of our life God Himself as the all-Perfect Love; but, in His personal life, we see God, through His Spirit of Love, actually realising His Divine life in human form. He was man under all the limitations of humanity, "made in all points like unto His Brethren"; yet in Him we see man, even

under these limitations, living a life of which God was the principle and the inspiring Spirit; yea, we see Him, in Spirit, rising entirely above the flesh, and above all limitations, into a life that, even as a human life, transcended the seen and temporal, overpassed the finite self, and was wholly one with God. We have in Him, therefore, the inspiring and satisfying revelation of the life of man as the Son and Image of God, and of human life, in its truth and perfection, as the life of God in man. How much this means for the individual and for the world will be manifest to all who reflect upon it. Men want *practical* truth; but what truth can be more practical than this—your true life as man, and the divinely-intended life of all men, is nothing less than the actual life of God through His Spirit of Truth and Righteousness and Love living in you as a perfect Son towards Himself, and a perfect Brother towards your fellow-men. If all men only believed this, and sought in earnest to realise this life, what would it not do for themselves and for the world?

### *Human Destiny*

But, again, the revelation stops short unless we have the personal and abiding Christ. Christ *died* on the Cross: Is this then the end of man's life as a son of God? The question cannot but arise in serious minds, What is to be the final outcome of our life here below, even when it is realised in its truth? What is there beyond Death? What is our ultimate Destiny? How many hearts are made sad, even in this our own day, through their inability to answer these questions! And where shall we get the answer? Whence shall any *knowledge* of a future come to us? Yet, if the world is the expression of Divine Reason, there must be some rational purpose in each man's life, some adequate ultimate end; and if all that is material,

and all that is merely finite, must necessarily come to an end, and the race itself die, so far as life on this earth is concerned, there must be some destiny for *the individual* above and beyond the seen and temporal.

The revelation of man's *Destiny* is, therefore, also given us in that life of Christ, when we recognise how truly He is a living and abiding Presence with us. He not only died but "rose again"; Christ is "He who is dead and is alive for evermore." We may question, indeed, the reality of the material resurrection, and criticism may seem to throw doubt on the records of it. But, be that as it may (and we do not here discuss the question, because the fact at issue is by no means dependent on it), we cannot doubt the reality of the Christian faith in the continued presence of the living and exalted Christ, or of His influence as a Spiritual Presence for ever with His followers. He died as man, but as man He rose from the dead into a higher life of the Spirit in full union with God, in which He lives and acts for ever. And if He "both died and rose again," passing into that higher life as man, He is, in His risen as well as in His earthly life, our Brother and our Representative. He is "our Forerunner Who has passed into the Heavens." There are reasons why the future should be veiled from us—wise, ethical reasons. A truly ethical life would not be possible, if the world beyond were as manifest to our perception as is this present world. "Other worldliness" would then, indeed, be a very real danger. But the reality of that life beyond death in which the issues of this present life are found—with a view to which, in fact, we are presently living here—has been revealed in Christ so as to make it a certainty to faith though not to sight.

Here then is our Destiny beyond time and sense made manifest, and, if we could but grasp the revelation thus given, what comfort and inspiration it would bring to our sorrowing hearts. Life does not end in the darkness of

Death, but rises into the unclouded light of God ; it does not run out into nothingness, but ascends to a higher form of existence, above the limitations of time and sense. Christ as "the first-fruits," Christ as "the firstborn among many Brethren," Christ as our "Forerunner" and Representative, has verily risen from the dead, and is alive for evermore in God. Emerson finely says—

"Thy servant Death with solving rite  
Pours finite into Infinite";

but in Christ we see that it is not as the drop is returned to the ocean, to lose its individuality in the water whence it came, but as a *personality*, to form which has been *the very end* of the Divine working, and which therefore cannot be lost, but lives on in greater power. What is true of Christ, our risen Head, must be true for all who belong to Him and in whom His Spirit lives. Surely this is a Revelation we cannot dispense with. But we lose it if we stop short of the living and abiding Christ. We are left with the darkness in which all finite life seems to end still unrelieved, and, however far towards faith our own intuitions and reasonings may carry us, we sadly miss the gladdening revelation of man in the full truth of his life as conceived by God, and as his eternal destiny has been made manifest in Him who was the complete and perfect Man, and, as such, our Representative. In Christ, therefore, and in Christ alone, we have the needed revelation of God and of man completely given. And it is only through such Revelation that God can be truly known, that His Spirit can come to us as the Spirit of Truth, or He Himself be found as our loving Father.

## CHAPTER VI

### WHY THROUGH CHRIST?

#### II. SALVATION

*Christ made unto us “Righteousness”*

KNOWLEDGE, however, indispensable as it is, is not by any means all that we require. We need not only to know about God, but to find Him in blessed experience as our own God and Father; and we require not only to see our true life and glorious destiny revealed in Christ and realised by Him, but to be enabled to make that life and destiny our own. These practical requirements are also met in Christ and made ours “through the Spirit.” We are here led up to the “dynamics of Christianity,” or, in plain words, to the practical “*salvation*” that is brought us in and through Jesus Christ. “Christ,” the apostle says, “is made unto us of God, Wisdom”; but that Wisdom is above all practical, bringing us what we most of all need, “even Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption.”

#### I. RIGHTEOUSNESS: ITS NEED AND PROVISION

Paul’s teaching on this subject may be briefly outlined as follows. God is eternally and essentially a Righteous Being, and without Righteousness no one can be accounted His son and heir, or admitted to His eternal kingdom. But men, Jew and Gentile alike, are all unrighteous, and

therefore all come short of the glory of God. In fact, the sin of the world places it in a position of antagonism to God; and since sinners cannot inherit His kingdom, "the wages of sin is death." This sinfulness is universal, because it inheres in "the flesh," or fleshly nature, in which all participate. Man cannot save himself from it; because, although the higher principle is not absent from him, it is not in him in sufficient strength. He is helpless, therefore, with respect to attaining to the Righteousness required, and becoming a son and heir of God. But God in Christ and His Cross has reconciled the sinful world to Himself, and has provided a Righteousness for man, which is made freely his through faith in Christ. It is a Righteousness in which God can accept sinful men, "justifying" them, making them His sons and heirs, and imparting to them that Holy Spirit of peace and of power in virtue of which they shall be established in actual Righteousness and eternally saved.

Now for the attainment of this Righteousness before God, and the peace and power of the Spirit of sonship which it brings, *faith in the fact* of its gracious provision by God in Christ and the acceptance of Christ as Lord and Saviour is all that is absolutely necessary. A man does not need to be a theologian in order to be saved. But this is no reason for refusing to try to go further. The more clearly we see the necessity for Redemption, and the more truly we apprehend the significance of the Cross in its Divine rationality, the more powerfully shall its Spirit and power come to us. To regard our Redemption as a hopeless mystery is not the way to realise the fulness of its power. Besides, to many minds there are great difficulties in the way of belief in this Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and Paul's doctrines concerning it are apt to be regarded as due simply to his Jewish training. To some the idea of "justification by faith" seems to imply such a fiction as is

impossible with God, and to be unfavourable to a high and strong morality. At most, Paul's doctrine, it may be said, has value only for those under "the Law"—meaning the Jewish Law: for *us* it is external, unethical, unreal, impossible of acceptance; the real fact on which it is founded was in its naked historical truth something very different from its idealisation by Paul; we have outgrown Paul's theology, and all that remains to us of permanent value is the broad fact of *Divine Forgiveness* to be apprehended by faith, and a purely moral influence (somewhat vaguely conceived) coming from the revelation of the love of God in Christ, and constituting a motive to gratitude and to new life toward God. On the other hand, while some may have abused the grace of God in Christ to their own sad loss and to the serious hurt of God's great cause, the warmest Christian love and the intensest Christian life have ever been kindled through viewing the Cross in some such light as Paul viewed it in—regarding it as the ground of God's declaration of Forgiveness and of our Justification and Acceptance with God; that, indeed, on which all our hopes are founded. Let us, therefore, endeavour to look the subject steadily and honestly in the face in the light of facts and of the entire revelation of God in Christ, and ask whether Paul's doctrine, not necessarily in the precise *form* in which he stated it, but in its truth and substance, holds good for us to-day, and is still "worthy of all acceptation."

#### *The Light in which it must be viewed*

What Paul had to seek (and it is the same for us) was the Divine meaning of an impressive historical fact in the experience of One who was the Son of God and the Son of man. However we may regard them, the death of Christ and His experience on the Cross stand before us as facts demanding interpretation in the light of that ethical Divine

*Fatherhood* which was the fundamental revelation of God in Christ, of an ethical conception of God and the world, of Christ as the Son and Representative of man, of the presence of God in some real personal sense in Christ (however we may yet be led to define His Person), and of the great purpose of the gospel.

The *Fatherhood of God* rules out all ideas of mere external law and penalty. These conceptions will not agree with Fatherhood, even though men are not as yet full sons. While "Law" as the knowledge of duty is a necessary stage in man's development, a Father cannot put His growing children under a hard and stern law merely, and lay down in some hard outward way such a penalty as Eternal Death for its violation. Certainly that would not be *Fatherhood*; and it is as a Father that both Christ and Paul teach us to view God. Fatherhood excludes, of course, all *merely* "forensic" conceptions of the Atonement.

Paul, however, had to deal with a system of Law regarded as of direct Divine institution, and had specially to defend his gospel, in view of that Law, with its claims and penalty of death for sin. His own view was not legal, but Christian: the very soul of his contention is that that Law was something temporary only, and was done away with in Christ. What he says with special reference to the *Jewish* Law, its claims and penalties and redemption therefrom, applies, of course, only to those under that Law, and not to such as were never under it. Thus, he says Christ was "born under the Law to redeem those who were under the Law" (Gal. iv. 4); and again, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13). Most certainly it is not true that under the ethical and eternal Righteousness of God "every one who hangs on a tree" is accursed; far from it. What Paul means to say is, simply, that all the claims the Law could

have against those who were under it were met and satisfied by what Christ endured, so that the Jewish Law is taken out of the way.

### *The Wider and Deeper Reference*

It would be a serious error, however, to suppose that Paul thought of Sin and Death and Redemption only in the light of the Jewish Law. These had a far wider, even a *universal* reference, under which was *included* that which Christ did on behalf of those under that Law. His whole reasoning is based on the fact that God is not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also. In the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Romans he makes it plain that even those who knew not the written Law of the Jews were under a Law of Righteousness from God: "these, having not (the Jewish) Law, are a law unto themselves—they shew the work of the law written on their hearts" (Rom. ii. 14, 15); and they know "the ordinance of God that they which practise such (wicked) things are worthy of death" (Rom. i. 32). It was not because the Jewish Law sentenced offenders to death (which, moreover, was merely temporal death or off-cutting from the community) that men were liable to death: for the death which passed upon all men because of sin was in the world before "the law," and "reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression" (Rom. v. 14). He proves that because all—Jew and Gentile alike—were found sinners, and "under sin"; "every mouth was stopped, and all the world brought under the judgment of God"; "because by (or out of) works of law (not of *the*, or the Jewish Law, but 'law' simply; see margin of R.V.) shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for through law (whether revealed or that of conscience) is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 19, 20). All were therefore destitute of

the Righteousness God required, and unable to gain it for themselves by any works of any law. His conclusion with respect to sin and want of righteousness is *universal*; and so is his statement with respect to God's provision of Righteousness for man, "through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "But now," he says, "apart from law (in the original, not *the* law, but 'law' simply), a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by *the* law and the prophets; even a righteousness of God through faith in (or of) Jesus Christ unto all (and upon all) them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace *through the redemption* that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth (to be) a propitiation (or a propitiatory), through faith, in (or by) His blood, to the shewing forth of His righteousness because of (or through) the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; to the shewing forth of His righteousness in this present time (or season): that He might Himself be just (or righteous) and the justifier (maker or accounter-righteous) of him that hath faith in Jesus (or that is of the faith of Jesus)." "For," he goes on to say, "we reckon that a man is justified (accounted righteous) through faith, apart from works of law" (Rom. iii. 21-28). "Yet we do not make void *law* thus, but establish law" (iii. 31; see also ii. 26-29). Because, as he goes on to show, those who are in Christ die to sin; the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus frees them from the law of sin and death, so that "the requirement of the law (righteousness) is fulfilled in them who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 4). This applies to Jew and Gentile alike; for each was under a law that declared "death" the desert of sin (Rom. i. 32); and if Christ had not died for the sins of the Gentile as well as of the Jew, *the great motive* which Paul urges on all would not have existed for the Gentile, or

would have existed for him only in a forced and artificial sense.

Here, then, we see clearly the universality of Law, of Sin, of liability to Death, of the need and of the provision of Righteousness by God for man unable to gain it of himself. Christ's death on the Cross is here represented as the necessary manifestation of the righteousness (personal) of the righteous God who had passed over the sins of the past (whether of Jew or of Gentile), but in whose sight they are worthy of death. And the righteousness provided for men is quite "apart from law" (whether Jewish, or of conscience). It is, for one thing, *a justifying righteousness*; this is implied throughout; God is even "He who justifies the ungodly"; but it also becomes an actual righteousness, in all who are united to Christ. Let us consider these elements then of Paul's doctrine of a universal Redemption in the light of the Fatherhood of God, of an ethical conception of God and the world, of the real presence of God in Christ, and in the light that shines in our Reason and Conscience to-day.

1. *The Absolute Requirement of Righteousness*.—This will be denied by no one. Whatever else God is, He is the absolutely righteous One, and His paramount, unchanging requirement is Righteousness—perfect Righteousness of spirit and character—the righteousness, not of an external law merely, but that of a Son of "the righteous Father" as displayed in Christ and as set forth in His Sermon on the Mount. The more completely conscience is developed, the more strongly do we feel that it is righteousness which God supremely cares for, that this is the one essential requirement from which He can never depart. It is righteousness alone that can bless His children; therefore His Fatherhood binds Him irrevocably to its requirement. Nor *can* we be His children in the highest truth of Sonship without being like our Father in this.

2. *The Universality of Sin*.—No more can there be

any doubt of this. Experience gives its testimony only too plainly. The consciousness depicted by Paul in the seventh chapter of the Romans is still universal when the conscience has once been awakened to feel the Divine requirement in its spiritual reach. Has any man ever yet been able to wholly emancipate Himself from the self-centred life of "the flesh" so as to gain the perfect righteousness of a son of God? To ask the question is to answer it. The matter at issue is not an external morality, nor the attainment of righteousness according to some human standard, whether of our own consciences or of those of other men; but according to God's revelation of the true spirit and life of His children in His one true Son Jesus Christ. The righteousness that Fatherhood requires is not lower but higher than anything that mere Law can command; it is the righteousness of the innermost spirit, and it must be perfect in its transcendency of the flesh. Only thus can we be *sons of God* in the full truth of the expression, and be fit for His Eternal Kingdom. And, notwithstanding all the progress that has been made in the spiritualisation of humanity, no one will seriously affirm that sin has exhausted itself, or that anyone is to be found *wholly* free from its taint, able to realise in himself the perfect righteousness that God requires, and wholly fit for the eternal kingdom of the sons of God. There have been and there are many good and noble men and women, even outside of Christianity; but the better a man is—the more thorough his goodness, the more earnest that he is in the endeavour to follow Christ—the more does he feel his sinfulness and how far short he comes of a life wholly dominated by the Spirit of Christ; so that, if he is to be saved at all, it must be, not in virtue of merits of his own, but on grounds of *grace*.

3. *The Reason of this Sinfulness.*—This is, according to Paul, because man stands rooted in a fleshly or animal

nature which he cannot transcend without the help of God. Sin inheres in the flesh or lower nature; the Law is spiritual, but man is carnal; so that he cannot do the thing he would"; "they that are *in the flesh* cannot please God." "The flesh," of course, is not the mere material flesh or the body. Although the body is its outward representative and "the members" its readiest instruments, it is itself *a vital principle*, and includes such motions as pride, revenge, envy, etc.; there is, in fact, "a mind of the flesh" as well as a body. The will of the flesh is the principle of sin in man, because it is that self-regarding, self-seeking principle which is the natural principle of the lower animal life. The truth implied here stands forth in our day as it has never done before. The modern doctrine of evolution enables us to realise and understand the fact of sin, its genesis, history, and inheritance as we have not been able to do in the past, whether we believe in a first man who sinned or interpret "Adam" as identical with the first or natural humanity after the flesh. As Paul teaches, "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which was natural and afterward that which is spiritual." Whatever may be thought of the traditional account of "the Fall" of man, there has been a real fall, inasmuch as man has failed to rise to the true ideal of his life as a son of God, and has allowed himself to come under the dominion of that "flesh" which he ought to have transcended. The essence of Paul's doctrine concerning man's sin and need lies in this: "the flesh" must come first, the animal nature, the central principle of which is, necessarily (in order to give the animal man a footing in the world), earthly, self-seeking, or self-regarding; while the divinely conceived life of man is that of a son of God, acting continuously from the Divine Spirit of holy Love. The *Ideal* of this life shines before him, it stands above him as Law commanding him, his reason consents to it, he may even *will* it as good and desirable; but the spiritual in him

is so much *later* than "the natural" that it is weak in comparison, and "the Law of God" is thus itself rendered "weak through the flesh"; so that the man feels himself unable to realise that which he yet recognises as his duty until the spirit in him be reinforced by a higher power.

4. *The True Conception of Fatherhood and Law.*—Before we go on to speak of the consequences of sin, let us point out the light which our modern knowledge of God's method of working throws on His Fatherhood and relations to men. God is eternally the Father; but the expression and realisation of His Fatherhood on earth can only be gradual and progressive. God is eternally the Father, and loves all His creatures, capable of it, with fatherly love; but man is not always and at every stage of his history in the truest sense the son of God. He is "the offspring of God" in the sense of creation; He is His son in the Ideal of his manhood; but it does not follow that He is the son of God in actual realised ethical fact. The animal man *cannot* be the son of God in the sense in which the spiritual man is such, and the whole effort and work of God in the world has been the raising of man to his true sonship. In order to this, "Law" must come first (not necessarily externally given); the Ideal must gradually arise in the Reason and Conscience, shining before man and commanding him with authority. It is in this sense that Paul speaks truly when he speaks of the universality of Law, and it is only after Law has done its work, showing man his Ideal and at the same time his sinfulness and helplessness apart from God, that the grace which alone can make the sonship real can be revealed. But in all this it is the Divine Fatherhood that is working. The Fatherhood of God did not exhaust itself in one act in the far distant past, but is a living Fatherhood, a constantly creative Fatherhood, and His great work in the world is the begetting of spiritual children to Himself.

5. *The Consequences of Sinfulness.*—"The wages of sin,"

the apostle says, "is death." We have already seen how impossible it is under the conception of Fatherhood to think of this as an externally affixed penalty. But it may be *a necessary and inevitable consequence*. Death in the Old Testament as the doom of sin has for its essential significance exclusion from the immortal life of the sons of God (Gen. iii. 22, 23). With Paul, following the Old Testament, it is something that applies, not to the body merely, but to *the man*; it is a *state* rather than a single act or experience, a state from which, apart from God's redemptive grace, there is no resurrection. It affects the soul as well as the body, though in different ways. As Jesus said, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." So, even to believers (and while all must experience bodily death), Paul says, "If ye live after the flesh, ye must *die*" (Rom. viii. 12); showing that the death that is the wages of sin is something *more* than the death of the body which happens to all alike. It does not necessarily mean extinction of being or annihilation; it represents, rather, as we have said, *a state* of hopelessness (apart from God's grace), and its essential meaning from an ethical point of view is still separation from God, or exclusion from His eternal kingdom: it is the *realisation* of that estrangement from God in which we are already placed through sin. That this *must* be the doom of sin even under the Fatherhood of God, and whatever the final issues may be in His gracious working, both Reason and Conscience must acknowledge. While the loving Father yearns over all men as over children of His Love, He cannot treat sinners as if they were saints, nor look upon them as sons and daughters in whom He is well-pleased. Nothing is more certain than that God our Father cannot admit sin into heaven; nor can He number those in whom it dwells amongst the heirs of eternal life, *unless the fact is made sure that sin shall be eradicated in them*. Only then can He so

accept them and rejoice in them as His children and heirs of His glory. For sin, if admitted into the eternal world, could we conceive such a thing, would infallibly work the same havoc there that it has wrought in this world. Not only the Holiness, but the Love and Fatherhood of God—His impartial regard for the well-being of *all* His children—render it for ever impossible for sin to enter there. That state beyond, in which the sons of God are designed to enjoy the Father's presence, is the final, perfect, eternal state. Nothing, therefore, can be more certain than that into that final and permanent state the smallest speck or faintest taint of sin cannot enter. Death therefore is inevitably “the wages of sin,” and it comes, not as an external infliction, but through the *inability* of the “natural man” to rise into the life of the sons of God.

If man is not a mere animal—if materialism is not true—the death which is the wages of sin is more than the death of the body; but the body is the outward manifestation of “the flesh,” and its death is the sign of that darker death or exclusion from God's presence and kingdom which the soul with no higher principle than the flesh experiences, and is that which ensures it for all who are under sin. Bodily death was certainly in the world before sin, before man indeed; it is the natural fate of the merely animal or fleshly life. If God had had no reason or ultimate purpose in the creation (such as is implied in His Fatherhood) and man no other relation to God than that of an animal, this death would be as natural in man's case as in that of the lower creatures. But to deny an ultimate reason in the creation is to deny everything, and it is *in man* the Divine Reason continues to work out its purpose. Man in his ideal and capacity certainly rises above the animals. What is natural to 'them is unnatural to him. To say that Death is the same thing to him as to them is to leave man among the animals. Death, therefore, in his case—while it is not to be

regarded as an external penalty or an infliction on the race at some point of time, but as the continuance over a higher race of a law adapted to a lower one—may be allowed to reign because of his foreseen failure to rise into the higher life for which he was created. The “animal man,” or man in “the flesh,”—from which sin is inseparable apart from a higher power of the Spirit,—is thus excluded from the eternal kingdom—without any need for an external penalty—*simply through impossibility to enter it.* The reign of Death over men, therefore, is best explained, in an ethical view of the world, as due to sin; on the Divine side it is anticipatory; on the human side consequential; and its meaning, from the first, was exclusion from the eternal life, of the perfected Kingdom of God.

We conclude this part of our inquiry, therefore, with the clear and strong conviction of universal sinfulness or want of righteousness before God, of man’s inability to gain the necessary Righteousness or to rise into his true sonship by any efforts of his own under any “Law” (because of his involvement in “the flesh”), and of the absolute necessity for the exclusion of sin from the eternal life. It is a loss to man; but it is also a loss to God—God’s great loss indeed; let us consider, therefore, next how God, in His great love and in His continued working in the world, meets man’s need and realises His own eternal purpose “through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

## 2. REDEMPTION

The gospel that Paul preaches is, that for man in this apparently hopeless condition—destitute of the necessary Righteousness and unable to win it—God Himself has provided that Righteousness, and that it is open to every one, freely, who believes in Jesus. It is a *real* Righteousness; but it is first of all *in Christ*, and made possible to

man on the ground of what Christ is and has done for us and of what He is still able to do. Briefly stated, Paul's gospel is that, since Jesus Christ, God's Son and our Representative, has in our name died both *for* sin and *to* sin and has risen in the full power of a new life of perfect Righteousness which He can realise in us, God's own Righteousness in relation to sin has been so set forth, and such a guarantee given for the death of man to sin and for his perfecting in Righteousness, that God can freely, not only forgive sin, but "justify the ungodly," who become through faith united to Christ, and make them his sons and heirs in Christ Jesus. In short, *man* is represented in Christ as having died *for* sin and *to* sin, and as having risen into the new life of the Spirit and of the Righteousness of the sons and heirs of God. Christ is the second Adam in whom the sin and death introduced through the first Adam have been annulled and man raised to full spiritual and eternal life. In this also we have the supreme revelation of the fatherly love of God. The foundation facts are, we repeat, Christ's death in our name *for* sin and *to* sin (which is really *one*), and His Resurrection beyond sin into the perfect life of Divine Sonship.

### 1. *The Death for Sin*

We need not stay to quote the passages in which Paul sets this forth. It was the first word of his gospel; as he writes to the Corinthians, "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3). So again he says, He was "made sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. v. 21). And it was necessary that Christ should so suffer and die, in order "to shew forth the righteousness of God" in relation to the sins of men (Rom. iii. 25, 26). It has become not uncommon to say that it was directly to the

risen or spiritual Christ Paul looked for salvation, that he had found that the only way of deliverance from "the flesh" was to lay hold on the living Christ and to have Christ as a Spirit living in him. There is much truth in this; but it is a very imperfect account of Paul's fundamental belief, and fails to show *how* the Spirit, in an ethical sense, could be mediated as between Christ and Paul. It is always the Spirit of Christ that is the power of salvation, but not as a quasi-magical or even vital influence or force; but, primarily, as coming to men with moral influences. It was *the Cross* that was the central object for Paul's thought and the central subject of his preaching, although it was the revelation of the risen Christ in him that converted him and enabled him to understand that Cross. Christ's death on the Cross at the hands of the ecclesiastical heads of the nation—the fact that He was allowed by God so to suffer—was to Saul, the ardent Pharisee, a sure proof that He was no true Christ, but a sinner. According to the maxim that all suffering is due to sin, Christ must have suffered *for sin*. But His resurrection proved that He could not have been Himself a sinner, but the sinless Christ of God. It was therefore clear that it could not have been for His own sins He suffered and died, but for ours. The problem then was, *How* He could do this, and *what* it was divinely designed to lead to. It was natural to interpret it, in the light of sacrifice, as a propitiatory sacrifice (as perhaps in Rom. iii. 25). But Paul could not fail to see that it could not have been in any strict sense of the term such a sacrifice, since it was *God Himself* who gave up His Son to suffer thus. True, God might have, in a sense, instituted this culminating sacrifice, as He had (probably in Paul's view) instituted all the Old Testament sacrifices; but it could not possibly have been viewed by Paul as in any sense a sacrifice to propitiate God personally, since he everywhere refers to its provision as the great proof of God's

love for us. It might be viewed, however, as a propitiation to *Righteousness* abstractly regarded, as a principle in the Divine nature which can never be set aside, and which had declared itself in the death which was the divinely-appointed doom of sin; or simply as a setting forth of the absolute righteousness of God in relation to sin, in view of His "passing over the sins done aforetime in the forbearance of God," and of His purpose to forgive and even justify sinners—"that He might be just and the justifier of him who is of the faith in Jesus." It set forth the evil and enormity of sin, and God's righteous judgment on it. Christ in our name died the death that sin deserved to die, and which the sinner must otherwise have died. In this sense He died *for* our sins, and God was thus in Christ "reconciling (the sinful) world *to Himself*," having "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21), not, as Pfleiderer suggests, as if it did not matter who suffered if only the suffering were endured, but because of the relation in which Christ stood to the race.

### *The Witness of the Gospels*

If, now, from Paul we go back to Christ, we shall find this doctrine confirmed and illustrated in the teaching and experience of Christ Himself as given in the Gospels. Jesus found by experience that sin was the great obstacle to man's true life and blessedness, the great hindrance to the coming of the Kingdom of God, and, therefore, moved by the Holy Spirit within Him, He gave Himself as a sacrifice to remove sin, and so bring, not only man to God, but God to man in His holy Love and Righteousness. It was sin, He was convinced, that kept back the long-expected kingdom, which it was His mission to found. God, He felt, must withhold Himself till sin is removed, and man

as man brought into right relationship to God. He was the Son and Representative of man, and therefore He must act *for* man and do that which was necessary before God. To effect this removal of sin, as that which stood between man and God and between God and man, He, the Son and Representative of man, gave Himself up to Death on the Cross. This was the object of His sacrifice as its necessity appeared to Himself in the light of prophecy and as the Spirit of God moved within His heart.

The Cross of Christ has undoubtedly many aspects, and it is the *Spirit* of it that we need to realise; but, none the less, had Jesus *a definite motive* in giving Himself up to die, and the more truly we can enter into this, the more fully shall the Spirit of the Cross come to us. His death was assuredly the supreme expression of the Love of God as it moved in Him to draw men to Himself, and so "gather into one the children of God scattered abroad"; He was "our Passover," slain as the prelude to our Redemption, and His Blood was the Seal of the New Covenant and Divine pledge of its reality. It was needful, too, for Him to die as regards the flesh, if His disciples were to be freed from the carnal notions that held them. His Death was also the highest expression of all vicarious suffering, and the realisation of the true idea of sacrifice, as the complete offering of the self to God. But, beneath all this, there was a deep necessity for His death in view of the Righteousness of God in relation to the sinful world. It could not be merely, as is often said, to set forth God's willingness to forgive sin, for this had all along been declared in the strongest terms and in the most glowing language by the Prophets and in the Psalms (see Isa. i. 18, lv. 6, etc.). It must have been to declare *something else* in relation to sin, and it must have been the expression of God's Love for us, not in some indefinite

and vague kind of way, but as meeting an absolute requirement in view of which God had to sacrifice His Son. For it was *God's* Love that was revealed in the Cross, not merely that of Christ considered apart from God. Taken as Christ's act merely, it would be no revelation of the Love of God, but an inexplicable act, which obscured the Love Divine. When we view it vaguely, or fail to see *God's* sacrifice therein, the Cross loses much of its power; we fail to enter into its deepest significance, or to read its secret as the *great deed of God* for man's redemption. It was through Love—through the Spirit—that it was meant to operate on man; but to feel the full power of this Love, we must see it meeting some real and deep necessity which could neither be removed nor met otherwise. Whether we can form a complete theory of the Atonement or not, Christ certainly died, not for some vague or indefinite reason, but for some reason that made His death imperative in the will of God, and so that God's Love was shown forth in thus giving up "His own Son" to die on our behalf. He Himself viewed His death as a sacrifice for man's Redemption—"for the remission of sins" and the bringing in of the Kingdom of God. He pleaded in Gethsemane that such a dark and bitter cup might pass away, if possible, and the Divine answer was given that it was not possible—not possible even with Him with whom all things are possible. The cry on the Cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is only explicable on the supposition that He was there suffering for the world's sin, and so suffering that He might bear it away. While it is to be psychologically explained as arising from the immediate experience which He was passing through, such an experience on the part of the beloved Son of God is not explicable (on the supposition that there is a God) save as vicariously endured. Thus far we see complete agreement with Paul's explicit teaching as to the

significance of the suffering and death of the Son of God.

But Christ's experience in Gethsemane and on the Cross leads us further into the understanding of what that death meant. It was not merely in view of the physical suffering of the Cross, or of death as the dissolution of soul and body, that our Lord felt such a shrinking and agony of soul. The cup which the Father had given Him to drink contained something far more awful; it was the death that sinful man deserved in its fulness that He was to die; it was death as it affected the Soul as well as the Body. This involved, as we have seen, conscious separation from God—that which would have been in the case of sinful man the utterly hopeless death or desolation of exclusion from the eternal life of the Kingdom of God. Nothing less than this is the complete desert of sin, and nothing less than this did Christ suffer when He died on our behalf and was "made sin for us" upon the Cross. Nothing short of this could have been the complete *confession* of man's sin in all its sinfulness, or the complete manifestation of that Righteousness of God which must affix such a penalty to Sin. Up till that hour He could always say, "I am not alone, but the Father is with Me"; "the Father hath not left Me alone, because I do always the things that are pleasing in His sight." Surely, never more completely than in that awful hour on the Cross was the beloved Son doing the Father's will. Why then was the Father's face hidden from Him? Doubtless through what He suffered there. But why did He so suffer, and why was He *left* in that suffering to that sense of forsakenness of God, if it was not as "bearing our sins in His own body on the tree," "tasting death" in its fulness, as that which sin deserves and inflicts, "for every man," being "made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." There is a natural hesitation to

accept this interpretation, partly because of the mistaken idea that it implies that this deepest suffering was something directly inflicted by God, and partly because of the difficulty of seeing how the righteous One could thus suffer the doom of the unrighteous. But that He *did* suffer this sense of forsakenness of God is certain from the records; and what other interpretation is possible? There is also a natural tendency to tone down the scriptural representations concerning the Cross in the hope of getting something more "rational" as it seems to us; but we need to beware lest in the process we lose that *power of the Spirit* which alone can make the death of Christ effectual for its ultimate purpose. That ultimate purpose is the actual salvation of men from sin and death and their elevation to their true and eternal sonship towards God. But if we think merely of physical death endured on our behalf, or of the sufferings of Christ apart from that deeper element that formed the bitterest ingredient in the cup given Him by the Father to drink, we shall not find the saving influences come to us in all their divinely-intended and needed power. They will not work in us a due sense of the evil of sin and of the greatness and need of the Divine Redemption from it; nor shall we feel what Paul felt when his whole soul went out in devotion to "the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*"; nor can we so much as understand our Saviour's shrinking and agony in Gethsemane, or the cry on the Cross of the beloved Son of God. These facts seem to hold us to this interpretation, and it is only thus that the Cross comes to have a Divine, universal, and eternal significance, touching us to-day as truly and as keenly as it did the men of old, mighty still to proclaim Divine Forgiveness to the most sinful, and to speak the peace of God to the most polluted heart and to the most heavily burdened conscience.

*Objections and Difficulties*

Is there anything in this representation of the death of Christ as *for* sin and in order to manifest the Righteousness of God in view of sin that is out of harmony with the voice of Reason and Conscience within us? (1) If God was to proclaim the forgiveness of sin and to "justify" sinners, was not such a manifestation absolutely necessary? We have here something more than merely individual forgiveness, which had always been granted to repentance: it is the proclamation of Divine Grace forgiving the sin of the world and accepting men, as yet sinful in themselves, as the sons and heirs of God. How could such a proclamation have been made without an adequate manifestation of the Divine Righteousness in relation to sin? We know what the world was when Christ appeared in it; we know how corrupt it was, and how it was constantly sinking deeper into corruption. Suppose a proclamation of Divine Forgiveness made to that world without that solemn manifestation of God's righteousness on the Cross, what would the world have come to? Would it not have sunk into utter unrighteousness? As an historical fact it was the Cross of Christ, viewed as God's judgment on sin, and at the same time the manifestation of His love for sinners, that more than anything else checked the downward tendency and started the world afresh on an upward course. History has most clearly vindicated this act of God in His ethical relation to the world, and both observation and experience show how necessary it still is. But it was not a mere governmental expedient, but something arising from the very nature of God and His relation to man.

(2) It was *a necessity in relation to the Divine nature itself*. God is the loving Father; but sin is that which is utterly opposed to all the good His fatherly love seeks

to bring to men. Nay, in Himself God is absolutely Holy and Righteous, and can do nothing that is out of harmony with His Holiness. God is Good; but His Goodness involves His utter antagonism to sin: He would not be Good otherwise. There is no conflict between His Holiness and His Love; both say the same thing and demand the same thing. It is Righteousness alone that can bless any creature; therefore, at whatever cost, Righteousness must be maintained, the evil of sin and its ill-desert in the sight of the Holy and Righteous Father who loves His children must be set forth, ere God can, if we may so speak, be true to Himself, or, to quote Paul's words, "be righteous and the justifier (He who accounts righteous) of him who believes in Jesus," and who is not as yet righteous in himself. In *this* sense we may speak of it as "*a satisfaction*" to God.

(3) It is often asked, How could the innocent thus suffer for the guilty; but, apart from other considerations, it may be sufficient to reply at present, that He who suffers here is no ordinary man, but the true *Head of Humanity* who bows in recognition and confession of the sins of the members of His Body, so that it is not for *others* He suffers, but for those with whom He is vitally identified as their Head and Representative; but we shall have to return to this.

### *The Real Difficulty*

(4) The real difficulty for theories of the Atonement, however, is one that has not been at all adequately recognised and met by Evangelical Theology. It is this: How can the suffering of Christ *at the hands of sinful men*—that act of surpassing *unrighteousness*—become, in any real sense, the supreme manifestation of God's *righteousness* in relation to sin? This includes also one aspect of

the minor question, How can the innocent suffer for the guilty? but the real difficulty raises a much wider question than that. Evangelical and scriptural theories of the Atonement assert that, in some way, Christ suffered what was due to man's sin; that it is the function of God to punish sin—"a Divine act," as Dr. Dale expresses it, and that the punishment due to sin, or its "ill-desert," fell upon Christ or was set forth by His suffering. It is because Christ suffered what was due to sin that the Righteousness of God (whose absolute Righteousness compels Him to punish sin) has been manifested. This is rather an external way of viewing the subject, but what it aims at is correct. But, *historically regarded*, and in Christ's own consciousness, the Crucifixion was brought about by sinful men *in direst opposition* to Divine Righteousness. Historically viewed, the Crucifixion of Christ was an enormous crime against God and His Righteousness, an unjust act from beginning to end,—how then can it become the supreme manifestation of that Righteousness of God which punishes sin? how can the sufferings inflicted or caused by sinful men be any expression of the Holiness or eternal and perfect Righteousness of God? or how could God in any way join in with this which sinful men so shamefully began so as to make it a manifestation of His absolute Righteousness? This historical aspect of the Cross has been too greatly overlooked by our modern Theology, and hence, after the best theories of the Cross as the manifestation of God's righteousness and the expression of the Divine sense of the evil and ill-desert of sin have been propounded, this ethical difficulty remains, and will again and again keep coming up in the mind, throwing doubt over our theories—How could that which was the crowning act of human unrighteousness pass over into the supreme manifestation of the Divine Righteousness? We may try to understand "the Righteousness of God" in some other way: but the

context and the plain purpose of Paul's reasoning forbids this. We may say that it is our own consciences that make the transfer; that we feel that what Christ suffered *sin* ought to have suffered. But this answer is inadequate from an historical point of view; and it is in facing this most radical question that we are led into the heart of that which best explains the whole transaction.

That Christ suffered at the hands of sinful men shows us that it was not a penalty directly *inflicted by God* He endured. Nowhere in the Scripture is it said that *God* inflicted anything on Christ, or in any way directly caused His suffering or any element in that suffering. God could not feign to treat Christ as a sinner when He knew Him to be wholly righteous. There can be nothing unreal or fictitious in the Divine acting. To the mind of Christ Himself, His suffering, while it came in the will of God, came directly from sinful men. "The Son of man," He said, "is betrayed into the hands of sinners"; "this is your hour and the power of darkness" (Matt. xxvi. 45; Luke xxii. 53; see also Matt. xvi. 21, etc.). So the apostles, while affirming that it came about "in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," say to the Jews, "whom ye by wicked hands crucified and slew, but whom *God* raised up" (Acts ii. 23); "for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8). It would be wholly incredible to say that *God* took up, as it were, that which was begun by sinful men, and added to it the deepest suffering of all. To the consciousness of Christ, God's part was simply this: that He allowed events to take their course without any intervention; that He "delivered Him up for us all," and did not save Him from even the worst suffering that then came upon Him; while the whole took place under the Divine moral order of the world, and Christ *accepted* it all in obedience to the Father's will.

*The Explanation*

The solidarity of the Son of God *with us* carries us so far towards an explanation of how Christ could thus suffer for us. He made Himself *one* with our Humanity, and was its Head and Representative. But that the suffering inflicted by sinful men should be at the same time the manifestation of the Divine *Righteousness*, can only be understood in the light of the great (and, in one sense, modern) truth of the *solidarity of Humanity itself*—that Humanity of which the Son of man was the true Representative and Head, and of a true conception of how the Divine punishment of sin comes to fall on men. (1) The race is *one*, and that *one race* was there represented in its veritable Head. (2) It is *sin* that brings suffering and death on men, in the operation of the laws that govern the world and according to the constitution that God has given man; not God who directly inflicts them. Sin brings inevitably on man its own punishment, and its ultimate doom must fall on man, simply because he belongs to a sinful race which is a vital unity. The punishment of sin comes about according to the constitution God has given to the world and to man—in that Righteousness of God which is over all—without any need of Divine intervention. But experience shows that sin does not always, in this life at least, light only, or even most heavily, on the head of the actual or immediate sinners, but on those who are associated with them or descended from them, or who may sympathetically identify themselves with them. The children do suffer for the sins of the parents, even of those in distant generations, and the innocent members of the community for the wrong-doing of the guilty. The parent suffers for the child, as well as the child for the parent, brother for brother, friend for friend. The righteous “servant of

God" has often to bear the sins of the guilty nation, and the saviour those of him whom he seeks to save. All this is so because humanity is *one*, and it cannot be explained or justified otherwise. We are all bound up for good and for evil in one "bundle of life"; we have a common nature and inheritance; we share in the good and in the evil; only to a limited extent does each man represent *himself*. In this sense "no man liveth to himself," and no man can cut himself loose from his brethren, or "glory as if he had anything he has not received." The race is *one* in its sin, in its guilt, and in its punishment, and, because of the sinfulness of the race, the race itself, if it cannot be lifted above "the flesh" into the life of the Spirit and of true sonship, is involved in one common, inevitable doom. Man in the flesh must die, simply because sin is inherent in "the flesh" (not the body). This is the inevitable fate of the sinful "flesh." But here we behold Him who had the consciousness of being "the Son of man," the Head and Representative of Humanity, electing, according to the will of God, to let the suffering due to the sin of the race fall on His own head as *it should come to Him through that which was the culminating sin of the race*; and we see God permitting events to take their course so that this result should be secured and set forth in the only possible way. The sin of the world came to a head in the crucifixion of the Son of God, and He, the Son of man, bore the evils sin brings on man to the uttermost, even to a sense of that exclusion from God, which is the extremest evil that can befall the soul and the last result and final doom of sin. *It was sinful man that caused it all*; it was what Christ suffered there through sin, in all the circumstances, that led to that last, bitterest experience; it was what sin brings on man under the ethical government of God set forth and illustrated in the person of the Head of the race, who

voluntarily accepted it as representing that sinful race. *He* was wholly innocent, entirely righteous, and He could not suffer for sins of His own, or be in any way directly punished by God; but He was the Head and Representative of a sinful race with which He chose to identify Himself (and with which *He was* vitally identified) so as to bear the worst that sin entails on man, in order to secure that race's salvation. That suffering could not come upon Him for sin of His own, nor could it, without a fiction, be directly inflicted on Him by God; but it could and *did* come upon Him through the sins of others,—through the direct action of that very sin the evil desert of which He gave Himself up to manifest,—and He bore it all in order that what sin deserves and brings on man might be set forth in such an acceptance of it by Him in our name. *It could not have been set forth in any other way:* In Him *the race* died for its sin representatively. As Paul says, "If one died for all, therefore all died" (2 Cor. v. 14).

The fact stands before us that Christ *did* suffer that sense of separation from God, or absence of the Father's presence, which is the worst evil that can befall sinners. There could be no *fictitious* hiding of the Father's face, and yet *through that which He suffered* this experience was passed through by Him. The human soul of the Saviour lost the sense of the presence of God His Father, and for the moment the sense of that presence was not given Him. All this was *allowed* to happen to Him the beloved Son; but it could only have been allowed to happen to Him because in God's sight, and in actual truth of fact, He was there as *the Head and Representative* of a sinful Humanity, whose sin He acknowledged and in whose name He bowed to the necessary sentence of death upon it. In *this* sense there was certainly "a direct dealing" of God with Him who here represented the sinful race. If it was necessary that He should drink this cup, it was because it was neces-

sary that God's Righteousness in view of sin should be thus set forth, if that which is the only real evil God's creatures have to fear had been "passed over" and was now to be met with the full gospel proclamation of Forgiveness. The fact that God allowed His Son so to suffer, while yet He vindicated His personal righteousness by His resurrection from the dead, is one of the clearest and most impressive proofs we can have of the reality of a personal God standing in a solemn ethical relationship to men. Christ bore all this, of course, in order that *we* need not bear it; and to remove this element from the death of Christ on our behalf is to weaken its power unspeakably—

"Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry, His universe has shaken—  
It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I am forsaken';  
It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,  
That of the lost no son should use those words of desolation."

We shall see it more clearly, perhaps, if we remember that in man's nature there are two opposing elements—"the flesh" and "the Spirit." From the first, as Paul says, "he that was after the flesh persecuted him that was after the Spirit." Both elements belong to Humanity, as it is, and both were represented in that death of Christ. In those who put Him to death we see the culminating expression of "the sinful flesh"; while in Him personally we behold man wholly "after the Spirit." Man, when he is warring against the Spirit, is really warring against his own better self, and he often crucifies the Spirit in the interests of the flesh, as truly as he then crucified Him in whom the Spirit had its embodiment in the world. Christ on His Cross represented *this twofold Humanity*—*this Humanity divided against itself*. He stood there "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and He accepted the position in which Sin in that flesh which He also wore had in its sinfulness placed Him, to bow to that death which the flesh itself deserved to die and which it must die, so that God

might bring to bear on sinful men the influences of His forgiving Love, and conquer the power of the flesh by the might of His Spirit. Righteous as He was personally, He was the Head of that sinful Humanity, which He alone could redeem and, in the power of the Spirit, carry past the death which was its due. In that moment in which the flesh did its worst the highest character of the Spirit as Divine, pitying and forgiving Love was revealed. Jesus, dying thus as the Representative of Humanity, purging its sin and *for* the sins of the very men who crucified Him, acted out the prayer—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Christ's death in our name *for* sin was therefore such a manifestation of God's righteousness in relation thereto in the person of Him who as Head of the race could represent it and bow in acknowledgment of its just doom, that God can consistently with His righteousness declare the forgiveness of sin, the evil desert of which has been so set forth. That it came about directly through the sin of man made it all the more impressive. It was *only* through the sins of *others*, with whom He in His great love identified Himself to the uttermost, that such suffering could have come to the sinless Son of God. That it was all caused by sinful men and not by God directly—that it was all the direct working of sin at its worst on Him who in Himself represented Humanity at its best—makes the Cross all the mightier an instrument of the Spirit; it shows the evil and enormity of sin in such a lurid light as to shame men in its presence and repel them from it, and it illustrates the great truths that it is *sin*, not God, that brings suffering and death on man; that man by his wicked deeds is really punishing *himself*, although the suffering may light for the moment on the head of the innocent and righteous; that Humanity is for ever *one* in its sin and in its punishment; that, as all are involved in

one common sinfulness, all are involved in one common doom if they cannot be delivered from sin. It sets forth also all the more impressively the love of Christ and of God in Him so redeeming Humanity. Christ voluntarily accepted it all, and God gave up His Son to endure it.

*Viewed from the Divine side*, instead of contradicting Fatherhood, it is its most impressive manifestation. God, far from laying punishment on the head of the innocent, *Himself* suffers with and in His Son; and it is as a Father seeking to save His sinful children that He does it all. The loving Father was not a mere spectator of the awful suffering of His Son, but was *Himself* a sharer in it. God was in Christ, not merely as an inspiration, but personally; and, while on the Cross, as the last consequence of what He suffered, the brightness of the Divine presence was hidden from the Son of man, God was none the less *there*; never, we may be certain, so intimately one with His Son as in that decisive hour. If there was no answer to the cry that arose from the human soul of Christ, it was not because God did not hear and feel the appeal, or love and sympathise intensely with the sufferer; but because as the Holy, *all-loving* Father, He *could* not answer it for the moment, because His Son was there drinking the very cup He as Father had given Him to drink. God was not outside or above Him merely, but *in* Him and suffering with Him. On the Cross, therefore, we see, not merely the Son of man taking on Him the burden of our sin and bearing the worst suffering that sin can bring on man, but God *Himself* in Christ, taking on *Himself* the burden of the sin and suffering of His world, and giving such expression to both His righteousness and His love as to become its Saviour. And, of course, it was the revelation of something essential and eternal in God, so that the Cross is not merely an act in time or a thing of the past only, but the manifestation of the relation which God eternally bears in *Himself* (and

in some measure in His most faithful sons and servants) to the sinful and sorrowing world.

To sum up, we may say that God is a true Father, and as such, necessarily, a completely righteous as well as a wholly loving one. He yearns over His children who have done wrong, and longs to bring them to the right and so save them. He seeks to have joy in them, and to give them the true joy of life. He knows they will never come to Him if He does not come to them. But, much as He yearns over them, He cannot come just saying "I forgive you," and treating them the same as if they had never done wrong at all. He cannot do it *for their own sakes*. He goes on steadily ministering to all—making His sun to shine and His rain to fall on evil and good alike; but He cannot open to all His fatherly heart. How then can He save them? What can He do without compromising righteousness and so, while it might be *pleasing* men, and gratifying affection, really ruining His children? That would be impossible for God. *He can so manifest His Love in a sacrifice which He makes at once on their behalf and on behalf of Righteousness, as shall win them to Himself.* But the sacrifice must have a real *reason* for itself; it must be the meeting of some deep necessity. And by that which He did in Christ He so declared the righteousness that obliged Him to hide His face from the sinners whom He longed to bless as to be able to proclaim Forgiveness to them, and so manifested His Love as to draw them to Himself. It was from first to last the expression of His Fatherhood—of the yearning of His fatherly heart over His sinful children.

But there is more than Forgiveness; there is the actual "*Justification*" of the sinner in Christ, or his acceptance as righteous and a son and heir of God; and this leads us to the other aspect of the death of Christ as viewed by Paul (or the other element there was in it on the human side), namely, as a representative death *to sin*.

*2. As a Death to Sin*

Paul gives great prominence to this aspect of the death of Christ, and it is only in this view of it that we can see how it becomes the ground, not merely of Forgiveness, but of "Justification," or our acceptance with God as righteous. If we think merely of Forgiveness we shall fail to understand our Redemption in Christ. What was needed and actually provided for in Him was the acceptance of men, as yet unrighteous in themselves, as righteous and heirs of eternal life. In this light the requirement was *security for the total abolition of sin in man*, and this was given in that Death of Christ, not only *for* sin but *to* sin. Paul answers the question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" by asking indignantly—"We who *died* to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" "We who were baptized into (or unto) Christ were baptized into (or unto) His death" (Rom. vi. 1-3). But it was not the baptism that created this relation of the death of Christ to sin; it was there before, and was only openly entered into by them in baptism. "Our old man," he says, "was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away—for He that hath died is justified from sin." "Christ died to sin once for all; death no more hath dominion over Him," and now "He liveth unto God." "Even so reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. vi. 5-11). In this sense also we must understand the passage, "For we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they which live shall no longer live unto themselves, but to Him who for their sakes died and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15). Here, therefore, we may see clearly a ground on which God can accept and justify men as yet sinful in themselves, since Christ has in their name represented their entire death to

sin and their uprising in righteousness, and has in Himself the power to make this, in the case of all, effectual. This was really what God sought, not the mere death of the sinner, but his death to sin; and there is no more fiction in the justification of such men as are through faith united to Christ than in the provision made for our manhood while we are as yet children. It is *in Christ* we are "justified" and only in *Him*, by a faith that ceases from self and accepts Christ and the Life that is in Him for our life. There is thus the Spirit or principle of the true life in all the justified. We might say truly that our justification is "through the Spirit."

### *The Witness of the Gospels*

If, now, we go again to the Gospels and contemplate the death of Christ in its historical connection and in relation to the whole life of Christ—viewing Him as the Son of man, the Representative and Head of Humanity—we shall see how truly His death was the death of *man to sin* or to "the flesh," and His resurrection the uprising of man in Him to the new life of the Spirit, the life of the sons of God and the life eternal; so that Paul can say, "If any man is in Christ, (he is) a new creature (or (there is) a new creation): the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). We shall see that His entire work, while from the standpoint of Righteousness and Law it may be represented judicially, was wholly ethical in its character. We shall see clearly, too, that it was no sacrifice of blood in any coarse material sense, nor the crude kind of "Substitution" that has sometimes been taught. While the sacrifice was necessarily made in the material flesh—in the body of flesh and blood which is the outward representative of "the flesh"—the real offering, sacrifice, and sufficiency are *ethical* throughout. It is in

"the flesh" that sin inheres; the principle of "the flesh" is the self-seeking, self-saving principle, and it is *this* in man, in opposition to his higher ideal life in the Spirit as a son of God, which becomes the root-principle of sin. Man must die *as to the flesh* if he is to rise into the life of the Spirit. There is no other way of deliverance from the flesh, save this death to it. The flesh has served its purpose, as dominant, in man's history, and now he must die to it and rise above it. This is the further Divine evolution of Humanity, the continuance of the creative work of God. Now, all throughout the life of Christ, from the manger to the Cross, we behold the subjugation of the flesh to the Spirit. Christ appeared in our actual flesh; in every respect a true man, He was "made in the likeness of sinful flesh," although it never actually became *sinful*, or, perhaps, we ought rather to say *sinning*, flesh in Him. The actuality of sin in man is due, as we have seen, to the weakness of the Spirit in him; but here was one in whom the Spirit dwelt in all the fulness of its power, and in whom it completely triumphed over the flesh. Christ was man *wholly after the Spirit*, through the continuous and complete victory in Him of the Spirit over the flesh. But the flesh was there, in all its strength, with all its natural feelings and tendencies, with all its love of nature-life, with all its possible strength of self-will and self-saving, or, rather, let us say, with all its natural self-love. Every form of temptation had appealed to Him in vain. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." But there was *one last trial* to pass through in which the conquest should be finally completed; one test beyond which even the obedience of a perfect Son could not go. He was the Representative of a *sinful* Humanity, and He must bow to the just and necessary doom of sin. This meant, in the last issue, the sense of separation from God Himself. This was the awful cup the righteous Father

gave to His beloved Son to drink. What this meant to Christ, how He shrank from it, how truly even in Him there was to the last a will of the flesh which *might* have refused the will of God, we see in the struggle in Gethsemane. It was there the final issue as between the flesh and the Spirit was settled for ever by Christ in principle, and it was on the Cross it was wrought out in actual experience. It was in the full acceptance of this cup that the Father had given Him, *whatever might be the consequence*, and even though it involved separation from the Father Himself, it was in this act of utter obedience to the Spirit, that the question whether "the flesh," with its self-saving principle, or the Spirit, with its principle of unity with God in the obedience of self-surrendering, self-giving, all-conquering love—the Divine life in man—should triumph, was, amidst all that could lend power to the flesh, for ever conclusively answered. When He as the sinless Head of Humanity bowed to the death of the Cross in obedience to the Father's will, even in the absence of the sense of the Father's presence—beyond which obedience could not go—it was not merely the external or material flesh that was crucified, but *the inner principle of "the flesh"* in Him and for all men. And it was thus, with the power of the Spirit that proceeds from the Cross, that "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for (or concerning) sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3), and that a new life in the Spirit was represented for and opened unto all men. The death of Christ was the death of man in the flesh *to* the flesh and his complete uprising into a new, redeemed, and eternal life in the Spirit. *There* was manifested *in man* the Love that should yet conquer his sin. It was no mere show that was gone through, but something actually *done* in and for Humanity. What was done in Christ then can only be compared to *the creation*; it is in fact a new creation; the end of an old epoch and the

beginning of a new one. And here also we see in it the manifestation of the Power that is behind all—of that Wisdom of God which makes even the most heinous sin serve His eternal purpose, and of that Love which is deepest of all, for ever giving itself to and for us in order to lift us up to participation in its own Divine and eternal life and blessedness. We see the continuous action of the Divine Father—God at such cost saving His children from sin and raising them to their true sonship toward Himself.

We see also how the two aspects of Christ's death are inseparable—the death *for* sin and the death *to* sin—and cannot be taken the one without the other; how it was in that complete acceptance of the will of God which involved His dying "*for* our sin," that He completely "*died to sin.*"

Thus was Christ made "*Righteousness*" unto us, and thus "*God was in Him reconciling the world (the sinful world) unto Himself.*" God can, without any fiction, accept *in Christ* those who through faith become freely united with Him as their Head, and who accept for themselves the death for and to sin, and the life of Righteousness represented and perfectly realised in Him. It is only in Christ that we can be so accepted, and it is "*because we are sons (in Him) that God can send forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*" Till we have been so reconciled to Himself, God cannot impart His Spirit unto us; but when we accept Christ as that Representative and Saviour which He is, and thus enter into the Reconciliation which God, on grounds of eternal Righteousness and Love, has opened up for us all in Him, *in that very fact* the Spirit of our Father becomes ours, we have "*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" and "*the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (thus) given unto us*" (Rom. v. 1, 5). We have now entered into *the Truth*, and the Spirit of Truth is ours and "*seals*" us as God's children. Thus the Cross, as the representative

death of Christ, our Head, *for sin* and *to sin*, is the central fact in Christianity, and in human history itself; it is God's great deed in time, and, rightly apprehended, the supreme revelation of God as personal and as standing in a living, ethical, and fatherly relation to men. It is *facts* that reveal God, and this fact is His highest revelation. The Cross of Christ thus becomes the supreme medium of the Spirit.

The Redemption, however, thus opened up and the Righteousness thus represented in Christ, and in which we can be justified and accepted, must, in order to ultimate *salvation*, be realised in our own experience. But this subject of how Christ is made "Sanctification" (and also "Redemption") unto us we must reserve for another chapter. We will only add here that the Cross, as we have already viewed it, shows us the necessity for the living and abiding Christ.

### *The Living Christ*

It is not in a dead, but in a living Representative and Head that we can be accepted by God—in one "through whose life we shall be saved." Did Christ not *live*, there could be no meaning in our acceptance by God in Him. How could God justify and accept men in a Representative who is no longer alive. The idea is even grotesquely absurd. For Christ merely to have died, and, especially, to have died as He did, would have been to deepen our darkness and do nothing at all for our Redemption. The Cross, if there is any Divine meaning in it at all, inevitably implies the Resurrection. The dying Christ necessarily becomes the living Christ—He who in our name conquered sin and death, who not only was "delivered for our offences," but also "rose again for our justification."

## CHAPTER VII

### WHY THROUGH CHRIST?

#### II. SALVATION (*continued*)

*Christ made unto us “Sanctification and Redemption”*

THE Righteousness provided by God for man in Christ is both a justifying and a real Righteousness. It can only be a justifying because it is a real Righteousness; for there can be no fictions with God. But it is first of all *in Christ*, who represents us, and we are only accepted and accounted righteous in Him because He is our Representative before God in the perfect Righteousness of Sonship, with power to conform us to Himself and ultimately present us to the Father as His complete and perfect children, made “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.” The design of the Cross, therefore, was not merely to bring pardon to men, but to save them from self and sin, and to make them actually conformed to that Righteousness of perfect Sonship which was realised in Christ, and of which His utter obedience to the will of the Father on the Cross was the supreme expression. This alone is *salvation*, and Paul clearly and constantly distinguishes between Justification and final, actual *Salvation* (Rom. v. 9, 10, vi. 19, 22, 23; 2 Cor. v. 10, etc.). With the most intense moral earnestness he teaches that no man can be saved who is not made actually righteous (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, etc.), that the Righteousness represented in Christ

for us must be realised *in us*, that we must die with Christ to the flesh, and rise with Him into the new life of the Spirit; in other words, that Christ must become to us not only justifying righteousness but "Sanctification," or the power of actual Holiness. The object of all that God did for us in Christ was *that we might be delivered from the flesh and become His sons in Spirit and in truth*, and that "the ordinance of the law"—that righteousness which Law, whether formally declared or revealing itself in conscience, calls all men to, whether Jews or Gentiles—"might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 2 [cf. ii. 26]). "Therefore," he reasons, writing to believers, "we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: for if ye live after the flesh, *ye must die*; but if by the Spirit ye make to die the doings of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. viii. 12-14). And yet he can teach that "whom He justified, them He also glorified," because there is in Christ the provision for raising all who believe to that "Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," although it does not follow that it shall be reached in its fulness by all in this life. The assertion or suggestion sometimes made that evangelical faith according to Paul is inimical to real, practical righteousness, is about as groundless and unjust as anything can possibly be. Far from that, his labour was "to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," the Representative of the highest Righteousness, and it is only because that righteousness was represented for *us* in Him that we can be in Him justified. If any man trusts in Christ for Justification without at the same time receiving Christ to work in him real righteousness, he deceives himself and "receives the grace of God in vain." While legalism is to be avoided, this cannot be too strongly emphasised. How then, let us ask, is Christ made of God this necessary "Sanctification" unto us?

Undoubtedly it is *through the Spirit*; and we might answer the question simply by saying, as is sometimes done, that Christ becomes such a power of Holiness unto us directly by His Spirit that dwells and works in us, that it is for us to trust Him for sanctification as we do for justification. No doubt this is true: Christ is made "Righteousness" unto us because He has identified Himself with us in our sinfulness, and He is made "Sanctification" unto us because it is possible for us to become identified with Him in His Holiness, through His Spirit living in us. In Christ's death on the Cross, *man* died to the old life of the flesh; and in Christ's resurrection *man* rose, justified and even glorified. Sanctification comes in between the justification and the glorification, but it is necessarily included in the relation in which those who are justified stand to Christ. The root idea of Sanctification is *separation or consecration* to God, and its principle or power is the Holy Spirit as it comes to dwell in hearts reconciled to God. Where that Spirit dwells, even though there may be much that is as yet sinful, the principle of the new spiritual nature of Sonship to God is present; through that indwelling Holy Spirit the man is consecrated to God; while that Spirit is cherished he stands in Holiness; and, as the Spirit brings all things more and more into subjection to Itself the work of Sanctification proceeds until the whole man is completely sanctified. And since that Spirit is also the Spirit of Christ and comes to us directly from Him, we naturally look to Christ to keep us in that Holy Spirit. We cannot sanctify ourselves any more than we can justify ourselves, and if the Christian man ceases to look to Christ to keep him in Holiness and to perfect it in him, he may have most painful and humbling experience of his own sinfulness and powerlessness. In Christ there is the power to quicken and perfect the life in the Spirit in all men. Just as in the first Adam there was the whole

promise and potency of the natural humanity, so in the second Adam there is the whole promise and potency of the new spiritual humanity—of man's life as a son of God. And it is faith that so unites us with Christ as to make us partakers of His Spirit.

But in the whole process of Sanctification there is a Divine order of working, natural and yet supernatural. The Spirit uses *means*. As we have already seen, the Spirit comes to us as an ethical influence operating through the truth, and therefore, as has been pointed out, what Paul at one time attributes to the Spirit he at other times represents as the natural result of Faith and of the influences coming from the work of Christ on our behalf and from the new relation to God in which we are placed. Although these influences are not to be *separated* from the living Christ, it is not by the descent of some quasi-physical power upon us, but *through belief of the truths of the gospel*, the Spirit, or Christ, comes to dwell within us. There is, indeed, a preparatory work of the Spirit in our hearts, convincing of sin and preparing us for the reception of Christ; but *the gospel* is God's great means of bringing us into living fellowship with His Son and with Himself, and everything in that Cross on which the gospel is based makes it the supreme instrument of the Spirit. Its manifestation of the hideous enormity of sin, of God's utter antagonism to it, of the certainty of its doom of death, of what it cost God Himself before, in its presence, He could proclaim forgiveness or accept men as His children, and of His unspeakable love in the provision of Redemption, are calculated to win men's hearts from sin and to inspire them with love to God; and all this comes to us in its full power when, through faith in Christ, we realise our personal forgiveness and our acceptance in Christ as God's children. But let us follow the process of Sanctification in its natural order.

First of all, what God requires of men and what He

has provided for them in Christ has to be made known, and the Divine appeal must be made, "Be ye reconciled to God"—"the ministry of Reconciliation." Through the preaching of Righteousness the Spirit must "convict" men of sin and make them feel their need of the justifying and actual Righteousness which God has provided for them in Christ. Those who accept Christ for this Righteousness enter into God's reconciliation and are "justified by faith." The ground of their justification is never in themselves, but always *in Christ*, and faith simply apprehends or rests on it, and embraces Christ for Righteousness. We are thus "justified by faith" as opposed to every kind of meritorious work of our own. Faith, however, is not devoid of moral content. It has always been, Paul shows, that in virtue of which men have been "accounted righteous" (Rom. iv.); because it is the response of the heart to God as He reveals Himself to it, made often in spite of the appearance of sense. Faith has always manifested a willingness to cease from self and to yield self up to God. It has always been, therefore, the germ of the Divine life in man. In this case the object presented to it and embraced by it makes it potentially complete; for it is nothing less than Christ in all His fulness, as "made of God unto us Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption."

The first aspect, however, in which Faith apprehends Christ is as being made "Righteousness" unto us, *i.e.* as the ground of our justification and reconciliation with God. But this in itself carries us a long way towards the "Sanctification" which Christ is also made unto us. The man who feels his need of Christ for Righteousness will also feel his need of Him for Sanctification; for it is just his want of the righteousness which God requires and the impossibility of gaining it by his own efforts that throw him upon Christ. And this acceptance of Christ for righteousness contains in it the germ of Sanctification.

For it means (and is found to be as it realises itself) an entire ceasing from *self* even in its dearest and best aspect—that of gaining righteousness before God—it is the needed carrying of us out of self and into Christ. It contains in it, therefore, implicitly, the very principle of that death to “the flesh” that was represented in Christ and must be realised in us. There are many who (like the late Mr. Matthew Arnold) tell us with praiseworthy earnestness that we must die with Christ to self and sin if ever we are to live unto righteousness. But how is this to be accomplished? It must be in principle an *utter* death to self, and done, not as a “good work” at all. We must feel that self in us, as a self of sin, *deserves* to die and must die, and we must die to it as that very power of righteousness which in such appeals it is still assumed to be. The danger is that, while self *seems* to die, in that very apparent dying, as a meritorious act on our part (or something that *we* do), it maintains a most vigorous life. How is self to die then and yet all “boasting” be excluded? God has provided the means in the Cross of Christ, where we already died representatively. It is only through acceptance of this—through identification of ourselves with Christ in His death *for* sin that we can truly die *to* sin; it is only in acceptance of Christ’s death *for* sin as that which *our* sin deserved and in the renunciation of all merit of our own and hope in ourselves, that a real death to the *self* that is the very principle of sin is effected in principle in us, although it may take a lifetime (and perhaps more than an earthly lifetime) to realise it in its fulness. Now this faith which thus accepts Christ for everything carries us out of self and over into Christ—makes Christ instead of self the central principle of our life, and it is now for Christ, through the Spirit, to produce His own life of Divine Sonship in us. But there is still a natural order of working.

A natural consequence of our justification by faith is

that we have "peace with God"; all sense of condemnation is lifted, all fear removed, and we can now draw near to God as our Father, yea, "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 1, 2). A further and natural consequence is that love to God and to Christ and to all that is theirs is awakened in our hearts, and thus we see how the principle of the new life in its positive, ethical aspect is implanted within us. God's love for us, apprehended on the basis of His truth, and seen in its unspeakable fulness in the Cross of His own beloved Son, is at the same time "so shed abroad in our hearts" that we are conscious of the presence of the very Spirit of God Himself within us—that Spirit of Sonship which was the Spirit of Christ, "crying, Abba, Father," "bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God," and consecrating us to God. We know, therefore, that we are not alone; we have found a new power; we are truly united with the risen, the living, the reigning, the all-conquering Christ Himself; we are no longer "in the flesh" merely, but "in the spirit"; we are no more under "Law" only, but under "Grace"; "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" has come to be the very Spirit of the law of God in our hearts; our own spirit has found its needed reinforcement; Christ Himself now dwells in us through the Spirit, and henceforth all that we have to do is to cherish and live in that Spirit of Holiness: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Thus Faith realises a living union with Christ, and looks directly to Him to be the power of Sanctification within us. Christ can be this unto us because He has realised in His own person our true life. In accepting Christ to live in us and in yielding ourselves wholly up to Him, there is no surrender of the personality, or giving up of the true self. *Christ* is the true self of every man, as He in whom the Divine life has realised itself in human form, and it is only the false self that is surrendered in order that the true self

may live. Man's great mistake is to think that he can be anything of real value save as God lives in him; this thinking to be "as gods" ourselves is just that which separates us from God and makes our lives such wretched failures in His sight. When the heart is surrendered to God in Christ, we are simply brought back to our true life as we behold it set forth in Christ the Son, who could do "*nothing of Himself*," but did all in obedience to the Spirit of the Father that dwelt within Him. That Spirit comes to us in its complete Divine-human form in Christ, and becomes the principle and power of our true life as sons and heirs of God. Our wills remain, and it is for us freely to blend them with the will of God, as it comes to us in Christ, and to yield them in freedom up to Him—

"Thou seemest human and Divine,  
The highest, holiest manhood, Thou :  
Our wills are ours, we know not how ;  
Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

This is what the Christian man feels and acts upon. The influences of the Spirit in the wider sense as they come to us, as already explained, from the entire work and teaching of Christ, from the whole word and work of God, from the ordering of His Providence, from the general discipline of life and from the new hopes kindled within us, all operate toward our sanctification. The end of it all is that complete death to the flesh and full life in the Spirit that was represented in Christ, but which can only (although accepted in principle from the first) be gradually accomplished in our experience. It is to be feared that there is no royal road to sanctification, although a strong faith in the presence and power of Christ can help us mightily. It is necessary to look directly to Christ to keep us by His Spirit dwelling in us; but our own efforts cannot be dispensed with. We must freely, as a moral act of choice and decision, "*reckon ourselves dead (with Christ) to sin and alive (with Him) to*

righteousness"; and it is as we realise our own sinfulness and the hatefulness of sin on the one hand, and enter into the love of God for us in Christ on the other, living in the light of the Divine Fatherhood through the grace of Christ within us, that the work of sanctification goes on, and we grow up into the likeness of Christ and are "filled unto all the fulness of God." The Holy Spirit works in us through our natural faculties. We must not depend on Christ, or the Spirit, to the neglect of these, any more than rely on ourselves as being sufficient of ourselves. The whole is expressed for us in those solemn words of Paul—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure."

It is in the gift of this Spirit that we see the power brought to man that can lift him above the flesh and into the life of the sons of God, that which brings to the human spirit—the weakness of which in relation to the flesh involved man in sin and death—that reinforcement and new life which makes the will "spiritual" instead of carnal (or sarkical), and gives power not only to approve but to *do* the will of God. We see here also how truly ethical and in continuation of God's previous working Redemption is: how really it is the necessary continuation and culmination of the Divine process of human development, raising men above "the flesh" and into the life of the Son of God. And, finally, we see how truly Paul preached salvation by character as did Christ, but how Christ, through His Cross and Spirit, brings to men that spiritual power which is needed before they can become sons of God in truth or rise to the real righteousness He has set before them. It is quite correct, so far, to say (with Pfleiderer and others) that the essence of Christianity consists in man's realisation of his sonship towards God, and it is highly necessary to preach the Christian life and character as set before us in the teaching and life of Jesus; for it is only as we are conformed to

Christ that we are really "saved." But experience proves that we are not in ourselves as Christ was. His life and teaching, apart from His grace, are still only "Law" to us, the highest Law, but not in themselves the grace and power we need: not even Christ could bring men to the true life without first dying for them and becoming a Spirit to live in them. The first requisite for the life of sonship is that death to self which Jesus as well as Paul called men to (Matt. xvi. 24-27; John xii. 24, 25, etc.), and the second is to have the Spirit of God's Son within us, as our spirit. How to save men from self and sin and endow them with His own Spirit of filial confidence, love, and power, was the great problem solved by Christ's giving Himself for us and to us on the Cross. The gospel of the Cross is alone the power of God unto salvation, and Paul's doctrine is only the explication of the great work of God in Christ on which that gospel rests.

### *The Living Christ*

In all that has been said it is, of course, implied that Christ is actually present with us and within us, and that He is one with the Divine Wisdom which rules in the ordering of our life and in the course of Providence, so that in harmony therewith, He carries out, in the case of each one united to Him, this great work of sanctification. It is a new moral and spiritual life we are raised into, and, therefore, the principle and power of that life can only be expressed and operative in us through one who has Himself *realised* it under its ethical conditions. If we must die to the natural self, must we not have (although the need may not directly make itself felt in consciousness) *another* to depend on, "who is yet not another," but the true self of every man, in the Divine thought of our life? If it be said that we should depend directly on God (the Father) for grace, we must remember the question is concerning our living

to God. Now Jesus Christ is He who, having in Himself essentially the Spirit of Sonship, has realised the life of God in man, and who, therefore, becomes, in His entire Divine-human Personality, the Spirit and power of that life in all who receive Him as such. When Christ, having died in our name to the flesh and sin, rose to a new life of the Spirit, He became the Head of a new Humanity after the Spirit, and Himself "a quickening Spirit" to all who believe. His Personality is, as we have seen, inseparable from His Spirit, and it is not merely on impersonal influences we depend for ability to realise our true life and do our true work before God, but on the personal presence, guidance, inspiration, sympathy, and grace of Christ by His Spirit living and working in us. He becomes thus in very truth "our Life," imparts Himself unto us and makes us so one with Himself that, as far as His Spirit possesses us, we really stand in His own relation to God and can have His Spirit as the inspiring and sustaining Spirit of our life. It is only through the inspiration, guidance, and help of the living, spiritual Christ that we can find the sympathy, grace, and strength we need in the lonely and thorny pathway we have often to tread as His followers, and under the burden of the Cross we may have to bear, and with Himself be crucified on. And it is only through close union with Him, "who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor," that we can support the equally trying load of prosperity, and walk through flowery ways and under sunny skies truly with God. It is only "through Him that strengthens us" that we can say with Paul, "I have learned how to do all things," and "in all circumstances to be content." And it is only through union with Him "who liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, who holds the keys of Death and of Hades," that we can pass through the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death, yet fearing no evil. The full *proof* of this real living presence of Christ with us cannot be put upon

paper; it can only be found through experience. But there is such reasonableness and consistency in the scriptural statement of it, and such a body of testimony to the fact,—such a great “cloud of witnesses” to its reality,—that all may be fairly called on to put it to the test and see whether it is not *verifiable in experience*. We do not need full enlightenment for this; the living Christ is always near us, always full of love and sympathy and helpfulness, and, however far we may be from being able to exercise a full faith in Him, He will turn from no seeking soul, but will, in some way, give us to know the reality of His presence and grace. If we speak positively on this subject it is because we can speak from experience. It is no mysticism nor anything exceptional, but sober truth within the reach of all, that Paul expresses when he says, “I live, but it is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.” We still find that, as Christ in the Fourth Gospel declares, He is the Vine and we are the branches, apart from whom we can do nothing. To the man who keeps His word, the promise is fulfilled by the Father and the Son, although in no physical or sensuous way, “*We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*”

### *Full “Redemption”*

It is easy to understand how, if Christ be thus alive and by His Spirit living in us, He becomes at length complete and eternal *Redemption* unto us. He carries on and completes His sanctifying work, till at length He conforms us wholly to Himself, and is able to present us to the Father “holy and unblemished.” Whether the work be completed in this life or needs to be continued in that spirit world “where Christ is,” the result is certain. If the Spirit of God’s Son be the principle of our life, we have a life-power working in us above that of the flesh, so that, while they that “sow to the flesh” shall “of the flesh reap corrup-

tion," they that "sow to the Spirit" shall "of the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal. vi. 6). This is in strict harmony with all that we know. The spirit is always the vital and determinative principle, and therefore, if the Spirit of Christ be *our spirit*, it will work in us, if cherished by us, till it makes us wholly like Christ, and gives us to share in His risen and glorified existence, "if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him." All this is according to a Law which we see working everywhere, natural in the highest sense, while it is a supernatural Power that works through it. Paul regarded Redemption as being completed only through the deliverance of "the body" from the reign of Death. But for this we do not need to wait till a far-off Resurrection Day, or to look for some marvellous restoration of the body of the flesh. Those who believe in Christ are not subject to death, in the dark sense of the word, and if the individual spirit needs a vesture and organ of expression and action, this also is ensured through the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ within us. It is the "soul" or animal principle that forms the present body, and in like manner the new spirit forms a body for itself. "There is," says Paul, "a natural (soulical) body, and there is a spiritual body. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." It was the Spirit in Christ that formed His "glorious body," and, if that Spirit be our Spirit or dwells in us, it will do the same work for us. Thus Christ *in us* can "fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the image of His glory"; and thus the eternal purpose of God concerning us as His children shall be realised, namely, "that we should be conformed to the image of His Son."

Paul teaches further, that through Christ Redemption shall ultimately come to the whole creation—"the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the

liberty of the glory of the children of God"—that creation which "groaneth and travaileth in pain together (with us) until now—waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 18-22). This deliverance is also through the Spirit. We can easily see how, even here and now, the suffering creation is being delivered, just as man rises intellectually and spiritually into the truth of His Divine Sonship and as the Spirit of Christ possesses his heart. It is to minister to man as God's child that the creation exists, and when its purpose has been served, its complete deliverance shall come. All its sorrow and pain have not been in vain, even for itself. Man and his world are a vital unity, and, therefore, the Creation itself must share in man's Redemption. What this in its fulness involves, or how it is to be brought about, we may not be able to say, but that which we do know concerning the influence of Christ's Spirit in men's hearts and the Divine Wisdom and Love in which the Creation is grounded, enables us to believe, with Paul, that the complete deliverance shall come, and that, even as regards the Creation, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Thus it is that *through Christ* God has provided for us that which we needed in view of our true life and destiny in relation to Himself as His children. In so doing He shows Himself as being truly our Father. It is into the filial relation toward Himself that He thus brings us through His one true and perfect Son. And all this is done *through the Spirit*. God dwells in us by His Holy Spirit, but Christ is the complete expression of the Holy Spirit's life in man—He in whom man's life in the Spirit as a Son of God has been realised, man's sin atoned for, man's redemption

from sin and death effected, man's eternal inheritance as a life in God entered on. All this was realised by Christ in His own Divine-human Person, and He becomes, therefore, the personal expression of the life of God in man, and, as a whole undivided Christ, "the way, the truth, the life," the Spirit and power of the true life in us, the personal Lord and Saviour of men. It is the Spirit that is the great thing in Christianity, but the Spirit cannot be separated from the personal Christ in whom we have God with us, as He has conditioned His being in human form and in adaptation to our needs. God, our Heavenly Father, is truly ever with us, and ever seeking to impart Himself to us if we could only realise His presence and live in communion with Him. But this implies the manifestation of Himself in His true relationship to us, and the bringing of us into a right relationship to Himself, the removal of the ignorance and sin which are the real barriers to communion with the Holy One, and the quickening in us of the Spirit of Sonship. And all this comes to us through the life and work of Christ brought to us *in the Spirit*, which is not merely an impersonal influence that we have by our unaided efforts to make *our* spirit; but a Spirit which, while it comes to us as an ethical influence to which we must in our freedom yield ourselves up, is also a personal, uplifting, and empowering Spirit. It is the source of helping grace, enabling us to find our true life in relation to God, in spite of the weakness and waywardness and sinfulness of "the flesh": gradually delivering us therefrom, transforming us into the image of Christ—"from glory to glory even as from the Lord, the Spirit," and, as it possesses us, giving us that very fellowship with God, to find which is the aim of all religion. God is with us in countless ways, but above all in Jesus Christ, in whom the Divine fulness dwells and "from whom we are filled up"; or, as Christ puts it in the Fourth Gospel, "I in them and Thou in Me."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THROUGH CHRIST—DIFFICULTIES AND ANALOGIES

THAT personal presence of Christ and “grace of God” in Him in which the Christian doctrine of the Spirit culminates, is, as already remarked, just that which seems so difficult to be received and held fast; yet it is so peculiar to Christianity and so necessary to its full power, so essential even to the full comprehension of “God in Christ,” that we must dwell on it for a little longer, having specially in view the objections urged to it. It is too greatly overlooked even amongst orthodox believers—sometimes it is discredited as Mysticism—and it is either almost or wholly ignored by most of those who seek to give us a philosophical presentation of Christianity. Nothing is more striking than the way in which all these systems (and even some forms of the more Evangelical Ritschlianism) leave out of account that personal presence and grace of Christ which is so prominent in the early records of Christian experience, or else explain it as being really the presence of God Himself or of His Spirit, apart from the personal Christ. According to Pfleiderer, for example, the Holy Spirit is simply “the Divine potency of our nature” arriving at supremacy “in our heart” (*Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 304, 305); and, while the idea of mediation as the “ethical introduction in history of the consciousness of redemption through the communication and revelation of its original bearer” (Christ), is recognised as a permanent and indispensable truth, for the highest stage of the religion

of redemption, "that which is at the root of the notions of 'the glorified Christ,' 'the ascended Christ,' 'Christ in heaven,' 'the Lord who is the Spirit,' phrases to which a mystical turn of the religion of Redemption is commonly attached," is nothing more than the Christian Ideal originating with Christ, and for which it is specially claimed that it does not remain always the same, but "goes on living in the consciousness of the Church and developing itself with the times" (*Ib.* iv. 139). But if, as is acknowledged, there dwelt in Christ such a transcendent fulness of the Divine, it is surely conceivable that, while the Ideal, as conceived by us, may go on changing with individual tendencies and growing with the growth of the ages, there may be, behind it all, the spiritual Christ in whom Paul believed, and in Him that which really meets every element of truth in this changing and developing Ideal, and that which can secure its realisation in us all.

#### THE THEISTIC OBJECTION

The idea of grace, in the sense of spiritual help coming to us from Christ, is, however, specially obnoxious to purely Theistic modes of thought. It seems even sometimes to be regarded as analogous to the Catholic belief in the help of the Virgin and of the Saints. But, of course, there is here no real comparison. Apart from higher considerations, when the Virgin Mary or any Saint shall have done for man what Christ has done, or shall stand in anything like the same relation to men that He, the Son of man, stands in, then it may be possible reasonably to believe in their presence and help as we believe in those of Christ. At the same time the craving for such sympathy and help that led men to belief in the presence and aid of Mary and the Saints, is thus seen to be something deeply rooted in our nature; and had not the *present living Christ* been first of

all lost sight of, the need would have been found to be met in Him.

But the Christian Theist is very much in earnest on this subject. This is really a vital matter with him, and lies at the root of his opposition to the evangelical conception of Christianity. It seems to him to involve the substitution of Christ for God, the loss of the real humanity of Christ Himself, and the derogation of all other men as human and as children of God. In all deep, and often self-sacrificing, sincerity, he asks, "If I am a man as Christ was, why cannot I find the complete power of my religious life in a direct relation to God in Himself, as Christ found His? Is it not only thus that I can be a true child of God and a true follower of Christ? While I gladly accept all the help I can find from the teaching and life of Christ, why should I be dependent, in any measure, on that which you call 'the Grace of God' in Him?"

We have already come into contact with this difficulty, and have endeavoured, so far, to meet it; and although the complete answer can only appear when we have more definitely considered the subject of "the Person of Christ," let us meanwhile seek still further to meet it, without at present going beyond what all may acknowledge concerning the *Humanity* of Christ.

Sometimes, no doubt, Christ, regarded in Himself, apart from the God who was in Him, and to whom Christ ever seeks to lead those who believe in Him, has been substituted for God, and the Christian truth of "God in Christ" has been thereby obscured. The man who refuses to live by faith in Christ so regarded, or regarded simply as an ordinary member of the human race, does only that which a child of God is bound to do, and we know only too well how difficult it is to harmonise the common teaching with some elements in the teaching of Christ Himself, and with the essential requirement of the religious life that it shall stand in a direct relation to God.

## CHRIST LEADS US TO THE FATHER

Let it be emphatically asserted, therefore, at the outset, that Christ by no means seeks to stand in the place of God (*i.e.* "The Father") to us. He comes revealing God, reconciling us to God, leading us to God—"His Father and our Father, His God and our God." The Holy Spirit as it comes to us through Christ is not to be confounded with God the Infinite Father, with God as Spirit, He "*of whom are all things.*" *We* are obliged to think of God as standing in two distinct relations to us. On the one hand, He is the Infinite Spirit from whom all things proceed; on the other, He has conditioned His Being in the created, developing universe; and the Holy Spirit, in this aspect, as it comes to us in Christ, is the Spirit as it has made itself manifest through such Divine self-conditioning. It is truly in one aspect "the Spirit of our Father," but as it dwelt in Christ and comes to us through Him, it is distinctively the Spirit of *a Son*—the Spirit of Sonship—in which we find and are enabled to maintain our true relation to the Father. Christ's very work is to lead us to the Father. But we need the true Spirit of Sonship in our hearts, and help in our life in relation to God, which it is surely conceivable we may receive from Him who was the true, full, and perfect Son of the Father, who realised in Himself completely the life of Sonship in the flesh, in whom the Spirit dwells in all its fulness, and who is the Head of a Body of which we are the members.

While God is in a very real sense in some measure within us all, and, in His fulness, ever near us all, it must be remembered that it is *as Spirit* and purely as Spirit He is thus near us. He can only be found and worshipped "*in Spirit and in truth.*" The Father, Jesus says, "*seeketh such to worship Him.*" But He can only find such worshippers

as His Spirit in some way reaches them and brings them to Himself. Is it not conceivable that it is in and through Christ His Spirit has been able so to reach men in general?

God, again, we must remember, is not only in Himself the "Infinite Spirit that is round us ever," but has also conditioned and expressed His Being in the universe, and is with us through the forces and forms thereof in a myriad ways. He is thus with us above all in those *Personalities* in whom His Spirit dwells in greater fulness than in others. Is it not conceivable that in Christ He has so conditioned or expressed His Being as to be with us in that unique manner that is implied in the evangelical teaching; which may be, at the same time, simply the culminating expression of that self-conditioning which is at the root of the created and developing world? Is it not conceivable that, as already suggested, it is only through a process of development that God can give that full expression to His spiritual presence *in* the world which, when once it is given or realised in an individual soul, becomes in others the source of the full life of Sonship toward Himself? That which comes to us through Christ is the fulness of that Spirit in which God has ever been most highly and most intimately with men; and this, of course, implies such a *manifestation* of God as shall be the basis of such influences of the Spirit, or the centre from which they shall proceed. And, once more, God is absolutely and unchangeably the Holy and Righteous One, who can have no fellowship with sinners, who cannot, however much He loves us and longs to impart Himself to us, come to and dwell in the heart that is not devoted to Holiness. However great His love for man, He can never deny Himself as the All-Holy and the Guardian of that Righteousness which alone can bless His children. The finding of God in His ethical truth, as we need to find Him, so as to realise filial communion with Him as our Father, may therefore require the removal of

something that stands between men and God and such an attitude of spirit, or disposition of heart, as does not belong to us by "nature"; and both these necessities may, conceivably, be met through one who stands in such a relation to God and to ourselves as Christ does.

#### ARE WE ALL SONS OF GOD AS JESUS WAS?

If, indeed, we were all sons of God as Jesus Christ was, then we might afford to disclaim His help and say that we are competent of ourselves to realise the same life of sonship towards God. But, without going behind what we behold manifested in the Humanity of Christ, we can see that we are not all sons of God as Jesus was. We do not all stand "by nature" in the same relation to God as He stood in, and therefore we cannot all live our religious life as He lived His. Even if we stand in the same relation to God as to its *kind*, the difference in *degree* is so great as to mark a vast interval between Christ and us. Christ was, indeed, truly man; but, while nothing can be affirmed of Him that cannot apply to Humanity in its Divine truth, He was *perfect* man as conceived by God—man in the full truth of His relation to God—and He was that *from the first*. Whatever may be the truth concerning "the miraculous birth" in its physical aspects, there is underlying it a deep truth in the light of which alone we can at all understand the consciousness, the Person, or the work of Christ. Jesus Christ stood "naturally" or organically in a relation to God which ordinary men do not stand in. The meaning and implications of this birth of the Spirit from the first, and its relation to "the miraculous," we shall consider later on; but, meanwhile, we only deal with it as an *ethical* fact, attested by the record of the life of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. There we see Him possessing from the first and "naturally," as we say, such

a consciousness of God as no one else ever possessed, and standing in such a "natural" relation of Sonship towards God as no one else ever pretended to stand in. While it is by the Holy Spirit that God is with or within any one of us, in Christ the Holy Spirit was *from the first* the very principle of His life and the centre of His Personality; from the first He was dominated, not by the flesh in any measure, but wholly by the Spirit, so that He was man wholly after the Spirit. The unique consciousness of God and of Sonship which He possessed as such a child of the Spirit mark Him off from all other men, and, while it is true that we are all *men* as He was, we are by no means all *such* men, and we cannot live our life in the same relation to God, simply because we do not stand "naturally" in the same relation of sonship as He stood in from the first. His was a perfect Humanity, and ours is imperfect, not to say *sinful*. He was from the first, man wholly after the Spirit and not at all after "the flesh." He was *the Son* who had a unique consciousness of the Father. It was this original, organic difference between Christ and all other men that gave Him His unique consciousness of God, and made Him know Himself as the Son of God and Son of man. It was this that was the foundation of that life which, wholly true to the inspiring Spirit, as it rose within Him, even unto the uttermost surrender of Himself thereto, made it the realisation of man's life in the Spirit, and constituted Him the highest expression of the Spirit as it forms itself in man, and as it comes to us transcendently, not only in inspiration, but in helping grace and in Divine-human personal form. While the Spirit of God is, so far, "immanently" within us all, and with us all transcendently as the Eternal Truth and Love of which all may partake, this Spirit was so "immanently" in Christ as to give in His life a "transcendent" manifestation of God, and be for us the abiding presence of the Spirit at once immanent and transcendent. The Spirit

of God in Him so expressed Itself as through Him to come to us in order to lift us all into that same life of sonship as was manifested in Christ, and so that God can communicate Himself personally to us, in spite of, not only a less natural or organic fulness of the Spirit, but of the fact that we are *sinful* men, more or less under the domination of "the flesh." This *universal* gift of the Spirit in its fulness was just the great promise for the Messianic times fulfilled in Christ.

It is quite true that God by His Spirit is in some measure *within* every man. He is there by the Ideals He causes to arise before us, and by the aspirations He creates within our souls. It is true that, as Mr. T. H. Green has said, "It is the God in you which strives for communication with God."<sup>1</sup> But the Spirit in us, alas! is "weak through the flesh." We need a fuller measure of it to help our weakness. Our natures have been tainted and hurt through sin, and though "the spirit may be willing the flesh is weak," yea, sadly weak. If there has been one in whom there was none of this "weakness," one in whom sin was wholly overcome, one in whom in the same flesh the full life of the Spirit has been realised, then the Spirit has in Him appeared in its fulness, come forth in a transcendent Divine-human Personality; and is it not conceivable that He can be a Helper to His Brethren in their weakness, and a Saviour in their inherent sinfulness?

In looking to Christ, therefore, we are by no means looking to an ordinary man, or to a man apart from the God who was in Him, or to one who stood on the same level as we ourselves stand on, but to one in whom that life of the Spirit, towards which God was raising man all throughout His previous working in the world, reached its culmination and realised its end; in whom, on the one hand, the fulness of man's life as a son of God

<sup>1</sup> "The Witness of God," and "Faith," p. 96.

entered the world, and, on the other hand, the Spirit of God completely expressed Itself in human form, which, as a Divine-human Personality, must abide for ever. What we have in Christ is the culmination of God's Creation as well as Redemption. In Him the Thought, the Word, the Life of God in man is realised, and that Power of God enters the world which can lift man out of "the flesh" into the full life of "the Spirit" and sustain him therein. In the experience of Christ, culminating in the Cross, we behold the painful death and abolition of "the flesh," or that animal life of which self is the principle, which necessarily characterised man at a lower stage of his evolution, and the entrance in the fulness of its power of that higher life of the sons of God which alone can become the life everlasting. The place that Christ thus holds cannot be better described than in Paul's phrase, "The last Adam was made a quickening Spirit"; and by what means can we possibly become sharers in that new life, save by such vital union with Christ as makes us partakers of His Spirit?

#### THE SPIRIT FULLY INCARNATED IN CHRIST

Again, it will not be denied that in the measure in which the Spirit of God possesses men, God becomes incarnated in them. Now the Christian truth is that, while in some degree this Spirit reached and dwelt in men before Christ, and still reaches and dwells in them apart from Christ, in Christ this Spirit was fully and personally incarnated, so that in Him man's life as a son of God was realised in its full ethical truth, and through Him the Spirit in its fulness goes forth to dwell in other men, to raise them into the same life of sonship. But the highest expression of that Spirit is *the personal Christ Himself*; it was His spirit and life that constituted the

complete expression of the Spirit of God that dwelt in Him. The personal living Christ is surely greater than the influences that proceed from Him, considered in themselves, and therefore it is in the personal Christ as the Son of the Father in full Divine-human form that we have the highest manifestation and personal presence of the Father Himself in that form. The Father, in short, near us ever as the Infinite Spirit "in whom we live and move and have our being," was all throughout the life of Jesus giving us His Spirit or Himself in His Son. So that in Christ we have, not a *different* person from God, but God Himself as He has expressed His life in highest form in our world, and as He has given us Himself as a person at once Divine and human. The Father gives us Himself in this perfect Son.

#### THE GRADUAL SELF-MANIFESTATION OF GOD

And if we remember that not only is human life subject to the law of gradual development, but that, viewed on the Divine side, the world is a *growing* manifestation of God, we may gain some glimpse of the reason why, even apart from the need of Redemption, we should thus only find God in His fulness in Christ. God has always been to some extent "immanent" in the finite world and in the life of man, but is it not the very meaning of human history that God is always entering more and more fully into our human life? If "through the ages an increasing purpose runs," is not this so just because God is ever entering more fully into the world? Is not our entire knowledge of God derived from these growing revelations of God? Pantheism would make God, wholly and once for all in the world, and the world itself a mere unfolding of the Divine. The physical world, culminating in man, is certainly the unfolding of a Divine idea, exactly such as we see in an organism.

But when we come to human life, we witness something different. A separate will here meets the will of God, and He can only enter into our human life through the transcendent manifestations of His Spirit as it *comes* to men (as well as rises in them) and is received by them. He can only fully enter into the world, moreover, when an organism has been produced capable of expressing the life of God—in human form, of course. The world, we must believe, is founded on a Divine thought, and has a Divine purpose, which (as we shall yet see) can be nothing less than God's self-realisation in human form. This world-thought was first realised in Jesus Christ, and only thus could God be personally present in the world. It was towards this that God in all things was working, so that when it is reached in Christ, the old era is consummated and a new era begins, the characteristic of which is that God has in Christ so entered our world as to be such an immanent personal Spirit of our life that through It the life of sonship shall be realised in us all. Having realised and transcendently manifested His life in human form in Christ, He is now, not merely the Spirit in some measure immanent in nature and shining forth therefrom, and in a growing degree immanent in man, but a personal Divine-human Spirit henceforth immanent in our Humanity; the very spirit and power of our life as His sons and daughters, with us and working in us thus in Christ in all the grace and help we need, till God shall become "all in all." In this light we see Jesus Christ to be the outcome of all God's working in the world, and, in the most real sense, the beginning of a new era of life in the Spirit, which in the Divine order of the evolution of the idea of Humanity succeeds the era of "the flesh." To ignore this is to fail to recognise any real *Divine movement* in history, and to place ourselves in a less perfect relation to God than is opened for us in Christianity.

## ANALOGIES

That God should thus give Himself to us *in Christ* is in harmony with all that we know of the Divine modes of working. Take, first, *Religion*. How does God make Himself known to man? "No man hath [seen God at any time"; but His works manifest Him, and through them, in some measure, His Spirit (and consequently Himself) goes forth to men—even from Nature. In Israel, from His great act of deliverance providentially wrought for that nation, His Spirit went forth so as to touch that people's hearts and bind them to Himself. Cherishing that Spirit, God was in some real measure with them and making Himself known to them. It was chiefly through the medium of His *actions* that He became known to them. Some natures, specially susceptible to Divine influences, or receptive of the teaching of the Divine Spirit, became in turn media of instruction and of inspiration to others; it was mainly through *them* and through the institutions and ordinances established by their means that God came to be with the great mass of the people. But even with these specially inspired men He was only present in an imperfect measure, as they themselves recognised. All this Divine working—there and elsewhere—culminated in Christ, through whom the Father could fully reveal Himself and impart Himself to all men. In Christ there was such a manifestation of God and such a Divine entrance into the world, that the Spirit is now with men in the fulness of its Divine truth and power, and in a personal form at once Divine and human.

It is the same in *Nature*. God, while everywhere as the Infinite Spirit, is also with us—gives Himself to us—as He conditions His life in the various forces and forms

of Nature. For example, He gives us physical life, so that we say "we are His offspring." He is our Creator, the Father of "the spirits of all flesh." But it is not *directly* that He is such, but through the mediation or instrumentality of human parents. He causes, as Jesus said, the grass to grow, and He clothes the lilies of the field with their robes of beauty. But it is not by direct or immediate action that He does these things, but through the instrumentality of the Forces which He has "planted out" in Nature. He gives food to man and beast and bird to sustain the physical life which He has imparted. But, again, it is through His powers which cause the corn to grow and ripen, and which produce the various fruits of the earth. So, in Christ He provides what is necessary for our spiritual life; Christ becomes the very "Bread of Life" to our souls. In the living, ever-abiding Christ, God has expressed His life and given us His very Self in that Divine-human form in which we need to find Him, not only in our sinfulness, but in our weakness and spiritual distance from Himself.

It is the same in *history* and in the most ordinary matters belonging to human life. God does not bestow His gifts—the knowledge and the power, which are, in one aspect, Himself, and on which human well-being and progress depend—directly on all men alike and individually, but through certain individuals He teaches, uplifts, and empowers the race. Through men of high genius and strong personality He educates and uplifts the rest, and only gradually brings them to the same experience. In these ordinary matters we are content to accept this mediation; why should it be otherwise in religion? Is it because religion implies a direct relation to Himself? But it is just thus we are brought into the desired relation to Himself through His Spirit. How can we

ever find Him save as He gives Himself to us and brings us to Himself? As Dr. Martineau has said: "The glorious persons of human history, imperishable from the traditions of every civilised people, keeping their sublime glance upon the Conscience of ages, create the unity of faith. And if it has pleased God, the Creator, to fit up one system with one sun, to make the daylight of several worlds; so may it fitly have pleased God, the Revealer, to kindle amid the ecliptic of history One Divine Soul, to glorify whatever lies within the great year of His moral Providence and represent the Father of Lights" (*Martineau, Essays*, iii. 1, p. 50). We only seek to give this fine illustration its legitimate and necessary extension by carrying it beyond God, the Creator, and God, the Revealer, to God, the Redeemer, Sanctifier, and Saviour. When God kindles a sun like that which shines in Christ, it does not go out after a brief period of active illumination, but continues to shine on, and apart from this it would not give us even the needed Revelation. It would be but a bright and transient meteor, not a divinely kindled sun. If Christ is the Sun of the Spiritual Heavens, He must shine on for ever, while human life on earth lasts at least, and that, not merely to reveal, but to sanctify and save. Just as in Nature the light, in itself diffused, is for our world gathered up and concentrated in the sun, so has God, the Universal Life, concentrated His Ethical Being in human form in Christ; and, just as the sun itself is in a very real and true sense present with us in his manifold and varied rays, so are both God and Christ present with us in the influences and powers of the Spirit that come to us through Christ. And further, just as the light and warmth and vivifying rays of the sun not only fall on the surface of the earth, but penetrate and vivify all that has life, passing through our dwellings and into our very frames, so the spiritual influences and presence

of God in Christ find no impenetrable barrier in the wall of flesh that presently shuts us in, but pass within and become light and life and "joy in the Holy Ghost."

### *The Conditioned and the Unconditioned*

We may draw a final illustration from the distinction which our modern Philosophy has emphasised between the Conditioned and the Unconditioned. The distinction is, in one respect at least, a real and obvious one. God in Himself is the Unconditioned Being, and only as He conditions His Being can we know Him or find Him. From the revelation that is given in Christ we know that God is essentially Love, and therefore that, in so far as the Love that God is dwells in us, God dwells in us. We know that He is our Father in Heaven, and that, in the environment of His Perfect Wisdom and Love, we live and move and have our being. But is it not one thing to know this and to rise in faith to God so regarded, and quite another to find God as a *personal* Presence with us? May we not be only able to do this as He has, in the course of His working, conditioned His Life in such a Divine-human personal form as we, on the one hand, can apprehend and enter into personal fellowship with, and as He, on the other hand, can come to us in, with His helping and uplifting grace? He has given Himself thus, He has conditioned His Infinite Being thus for us, in Jesus Christ, and, when united to Christ—made "one Spirit" with the Living Lord and Love—we find God our Father with us in Him as we cannot find Him otherwise by direct and fresh seeking of our own; we find the Father in the Son. The Theism, therefore, which, with however lofty a motive, ignores that Revelation and continued Presence of God in Christ,—like some of those systems of old which thought to "deny the Son" and yet "have the Father,"—seems to forget the important and real distinction which

our modern thought has made so prominent between Conditioned and Unconditioned Being, and which we may yet find to be virtually the same as the distinction on which the Logos doctrine of the Fourth Gospel is founded, between God as unrevealed and God as revealed.

### *Consciousness of Need*

We have already seen, however, that Christ comes as *a Saviour*, and, without that sense of sin and weakness which makes us feel our need of salvation in view of that life of sonship to which we are called in Christ, merely intellectual considerations, although they may serve the very desirable purpose of clearing away mental difficulties, may never lead to conviction. It is still true, not only that it is the pure in heart who see God, but that the pure, clear, sincere heart is a lowly heart; and the gospel of God's grace has still for its opening Benediction, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

## PART III



### THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND THE INCARNATION



## CHAPTER I

### RELATION TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WE have yet to inquire, however, more definitely into the distinctively Christian teaching concerning the Person of Christ; because, as already stated, in the New Testament records the coming of the Spirit is made dependent on His Person as well as on His work; His work, indeed, is based on His Person. We have as yet come to no definite doctrine on this subject, and we might be tempted to leave it vague and undefined, content to affirm that in Christ the Spirit has been incarnated in its fulness, in whatever way this may have been done, and that, whatever may be the complete truth concerning His Person, Christ has for us "the value of God."

#### THE DIFFICULTY OF THE SUBJECT

The subject is to many, one of supreme difficulty. Inability to believe in the Deity of Christ as it is commonly stated, or to harmonise it with Christ's own language in the Synoptic Gospels and with the constant distinction, *verbally* at least, between "Christ" and "God" throughout the entire New Testament, keeps many earnest souls from the evangelical faith. We simply speak the truth when we say that there are those who have through weary years studied and pondered this subject on bended knees before God, agonising to find the truth, and have yet been compelled, in very loyalty to God and to what they believe to have been the genuine teaching of Christ Himself and His

apostles, to reject the doctrine of the Deity of Christ and to maintain that of the Father only, as they are convinced Christ Himself did. Yet, as we have seen, if we are to accept the Holy Spirit as the distinctive thing in Christianity, we find it so related to Christ as well as to God the Father, and Christ so identified with it, as implies that, at the least, Christ stands in such a unique relation to God as none else stands in, and such as justifies the Christian formula of "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," wherein Christ is associated with God in a manner possible to no other person.

Some would say, Why not stop here? Why not be content simply to *accept* Christ as He in and through whom God gives us the Spirit in analogy, as we have seen, with all His working in the world, without attempting to go behind it, to be perhaps entangled in those metaphysical conceptions of the Person of Christ which are so difficult to be received, and which are specially obnoxious to some tendencies of religious thought at present? Why not simply *take* Christ and all that comes to us in and through Him as the culmination of all God's working in the world, just as manifestly proceeding from God as the creation itself, although, perhaps, as impossible to be understood by us? Why not be content with the *facts* as these are summed up in the apostolic statements that Christ was "God's own Son"; that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself"; that Christ has become to us "a quickening Spirit"; that He has been "made of God to us, Wisdom, even Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption"? Some may even believe that it is not possible to gain any definite doctrine concerning either the Spirit or the Person of Christ, which is apparently the position of Principal Drummond in his, in other respects, valuable book on *The Simplest Conception of Christianity*. It is the position also of many of those belonging to the school of Ritschl in Germany.

## FAITH IN THE FACT

We are far from believing that we may not thus have, in a large measure, practical experience of the Spirit and of the saving power of God in Christ. On the contrary, we would earnestly maintain that the man who believes in Christ as the supreme organ of the Spirit, and who looks to Him as His Saviour, may experience His salvation, however indefinite his opinions may be, and whatever theory he holds of the Person of Christ. He may feel himself quite unable to form such a theory as shall, in view of all the facts, be consistent and satisfying—one that shall do justice to both the Divine and the human in Christ, and be true to the representation of His life in the first three Gospels as well as in the Fourth. To some it may seem also as impossible to conceive the mode of the Incarnation of God in Christ as it is to conceive the mode of the Creation, or of the Divine manifestation in the world in general. Yet such may thankfully accept and rejoice in Christ as their Saviour, even their living Saviour; through Him they may find God and "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and may jealously watch that no man take from them that which they have thus found by the *imposition* of theories concerning His Person or the mode of the Incarnation of God in Him which they are unable honestly to accept, strive as they may. As has been frequently said of late concerning the Atonement, it is *the fact* that we have to believe in, not some particular theory of it; so is it with the Incarnation. It is undoubtedly a devoted love to Christ that makes a Christian, in whatever way that love may have been kindled: and we must be extremely careful not to deny the Christian name or a Christian experience to anyone in whose heart that love dwells, however imperfect his knowledge of Christ may appear to us. But this fact does not make the great work

of Christ on our behalf the less necessary, nor does it render it in any measure less desirable to inquire concerning His Person. The more truly we love Christ, the more earnestly surely shall we desire to know about Him, and the fuller our knowledge of His Person, the greater our love to Him will be. If the element of mystery which seems to surround Him appears to be necessary for that reverence that uplifts the soul to Christ, according to the maxim that where mystery ends worship itself will end, we need not be in the least afraid that after we have pushed our inquiries as far as possible all mystery will vanish. For at last we must end in Him who is "the most ancient of all mysteries."

#### WHY THE QUESTION MUST BE FACED

We are compelled therefore to face the question of the Person of Christ. As already pointed out, the coming of the Spirit through Christ depends on His Person as well as on His work; and we cannot rightly take the teaching of the Christian Scriptures so far and leave off when it comes to the Person of Christ. The mind, moreover, will seek satisfaction, and we can see no reason why we should violently stifle its craving here. We must beware how we hush the Reason with the lullaby of "mystery," for that is the way ultimately to superstition, or to the soul-less formalism that is content with the repetition of the mere words of a creed. We sometimes see what looks like a tendency to take "the leap in the dark" of a blind faith in that which is held to be good; but such is far from wholesome, and the least suspicion that we are embracing something not wholly rational will be as a seed of insincerity in our heart. "The Spirit," moreover, is promised to guide us into "all the truth," and we should be faithless were we not to seek its guidance into this most important truth. Nor can we shut our eyes to the fact that the

Christian apostles were, as they believed, led under that Spirit's guidance to a definite belief on the subject, which had not a little to do with the influence of Christ upon themselves and with the power of the Spirit in their preaching; and that the great body of the Christian Church holds a positive doctrine concerning the Person of Christ, namely, that Christ was the Eternal Son of God, who for our sakes became man, that He was God as well as man; and it can be, at least, forcibly argued (as Dr. Orr does in his *Christian View of God and the World*) that no lower view of Christ's Person has ever been, or ever can be, able to maintain itself without falling back into something inadequate for spiritual life. That doctrine, as it has been formulated in the creeds of the Church, has, indeed, at every stage of its formulation and in its completion, called forth protests from some professing to belong to Christ equally with the orthodox; and it is admitted by not a few thoughtful believers to stand in need of reconstruction. In its present form it is, without doubt, the chief obstacle with many to keep them from faith in Christ as a spiritual Saviour in anything like the evangelical sense of the term. But this last fact alone should furnish a sufficient reason for our addressing ourselves to the subject, and for our inquiring first, what the scriptural doctrine concerning Christ really is, and, secondly, whether it can be stated in such terms as shall show it to be worthy of all acceptation by the reason as well as by the conscience and heart. If the New Testament has a doctrine concerning the Person of Christ, the Giver of the Spirit, we are bound to proceed as we have hitherto done and ask what that doctrine is.

#### SPECIAL REASONS

But we are specially necessitated to do this by reasons arising out of that which we have found to be the great

practical power in Christianity—the influence of the Holy Spirit as it comes to us through Christ. There are questions which must remain still in some measure unanswered till we have seen the truth on this subject.

I. We have not yet reached a full understanding of what the Holy Spirit is in itself, and we find Christ conjoined with God the Father and with the Spirit in such a way that we are forced to seek an explanation of the fact. It is manifestly impossible to make a sharp or rigid distinction between God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is certainly something we receive from God; it is something "of God," His own Spirit, the Spirit of our Father dwelling in our hearts, and bringing the very presence and power of God Himself within us; it is the bond of communion between the Father and His reconciled children, the source of peace, the pledge of all good, the seal attesting our acceptance, the witness in our hearts to our sonship, the earnest of our eternal inheritance. All this carries us up to God. It was, moreover, that whereby the Father was dwelling in Christ; that which was the principle of Christ's life from the first, with which He was, in His Humanity, wholly one, and through His unity with which, we may believe, He is present with us and operative in us. But the Spirit is spoken of also, quite unreservedly, as the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God's Son; nay, Christ, as well as God, or the Father, is said to be the Giver of the Spirit—that Spirit which is the very Spirit and gift of God, and which brings us into fellowship with God; and certainly it was in and through this Person, Christ, that the Spirit was fully manifested and sent forth into the world. The operations of the Spirit are thus equally those of God and those of Christ, who was no temporary manifestation of the Spirit, but permanently identified with it. All this, especially the impossibility of separating between Christ and the Spirit and God and the Spirit, leads us to feel that,

before we can fully understand the doctrine of the Spirit, or see what it really is, we must have some light on the Person of Him through whom the Spirit in its fulness comes to us, who is present everywhere, just as God is present, who is so identified with the Spirit that He becomes the Spirit of true life and the personal Friend and Saviour of all men everywhere, and who is associated with God as He is, even in the giving of the Spirit.

2. We must ask further, How does Christ come to be that manifestation and expression of the Spirit of God which He is in such a unique degree? How did that Spirit, which is the very inner life of God, come to enter the world with such fulness in Christ, and so as to give expression to itself in that abiding personal form which constitutes Him to all time and to all men the sufficient personal Mediator, and "the Lord the Spirit," or "the Lord of the Spirit"? How was that Spirit *from the first* the principle of His life?

3. How can Christ be that real, unique revelation of *God* to men that He is? What does such a revelation of God imply as respects the Person in and through whom it is given? We must remember that it is *God* whom we must see in some real way revealed in Christ. We must see in Christ not merely a *man* inspired by God, however fully, but one in whom God Himself is present in some real, personal way, so that the acts of Christ are at the same time the acts of God in Him. Otherwise, the life and sufferings of Christ were no revelation of the love of *God*, but only of that of a man devoted to what He believed to be God. We should only see in Christ the Prince of that noble army of martyrs, who (apart from the real presence of God in Christ) are, grand in their heroic devotion to the true and the good, but still a great problem rather than a glorious revelation.

4. How can Christ be *our Representative*—the Repre-

sentative and Head of all men—so that He can bear our sins, and be the pledge to God of our establishment in Righteousness? How can He be the true *self* of every man, so that it is “no longer we that live, but Christ that lives in us”? What is implied in His Headship of Humanity?

5. But over and above these and similar questions which force themselves upon us, *the very nature of the Spirit* as operating *through the truth*, as well as its effects in our hearts, impel us to seek for *the truth* concerning the Person of Christ. It is conceivable that the truth on this subject may be no unimportant element in the influences of the Spirit as these go forth from Christ. It must make a great difference, surely, whether we believe that Christ was only a man standing in the same relation to the Eternal Father as other men stand in, or the Son of God in a higher, nearer, even it may be in a Divine and eternal sense. The power of the love of *God* as it goes out to us in Christ, and the power of Christ’s example, cannot possibly be the same in the one case as in the other; nor can they be the same if we stop short and decline to form any opinion at all concerning the relation of Christ to God. Indeed, as it is *wholly* through the self-manifestation of God that the Spirit of God in the Gospel comes to operate on us, the question here facing us must be one of supreme importance.

6. Finally, if we are to retain Christ in the relation in which the Christian Scriptures and Christian experience regard Him as standing to us in, and are yet to realise our life in direct relation to God or “the Father”; if we are to pray without distraction, and be able to rest in *God* as with us and within us, we must seek in some way the removal of all dualism as between Christ and God, and find such a real unity of Person as shall give us perfect mental and spiritual rest. The Holy Spirit is not one of doubt and

distraction, but of peace and rest and "full assurance of faith," "a Spirit of wisdom and understanding in the fear of the Lord." It is the necessity for our being freed from this mental and spiritual distraction that creates the temptation to leave out *Christ* as standing in a permanent personal relation to us, and to think only of "God" or of "the Holy Spirit"; but we have seen the impossibility of doing this, while yet adhering to essential Christian conceptions. For that mental rest, therefore, which is no small element of that "peace of God" so important for our spiritual life, we must go on to inquire whether there is any way of viewing Christ's Person which shall remove all shadow of dualism as between Christ and God, and give our hearts that full assurance of faith which the Spirit is meant to bestow.

As already remarked, we are painfully conscious of the difficulties which are attached to the reception of the Christian view of Christ's Person, and the Incarnation with which it is associated, as these are commonly stated. But our first concern must be to get at the actual facts of the apostolic preaching of Christ, and of Christ's own statements concerning Himself in relation to God. If we succeed in this, we have every reason to believe that real difficulties to our intellectual acceptance of the truth, whatever that truth may be, will disappear before an earnest endeavour to understand it, so far at least as to enable us to rest in it without any suspicion of contradiction between faith and reason, or between the heart and the intellect. We come to the inquiry without any prejudgment, and simply under the necessity of endeavouring to know the truth.

#### TENTATIVE THEORIES

Perhaps, however, before we go further it may be well to ask ourselves what we should say concerning the Person

of Christ in view of all that we have already seen of His relation to God and ourselves and the Spirit, if we were to attempt, just at this stage, to form any theory concerning His Person.

1. The least we could say would be that *God was in Him*, and that not merely as an influence visiting Him, but as a Person in some way entering into and expressing Himself through His Personality. It seems a simple thing to say that God was *in Christ*, or that He was a divinely-filled man—much simpler than the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation; but if we say that God was in Christ *personally*, so that, in some way, the human personality became the expression of the Divine personality, the simplification disappears. And we *must* say this if Christ is to be really a revelation of *God* and of the love of *God*, and not merely a man standing in a certain relation to God and inspired by impersonal Divine influences.

2. More definitely, it might seem, especially in view of Christ's relation to the Spirit, and taking the Spirit as representing the Divine as it enters the world, that Christ was a *personal Incarnation* of the Spirit. This again seems simple enough; but we have not escaped the "metaphysical" in so stating it. We have herein affirmed a distinctly *Divine* side to the Person of Christ. For, if the Spirit of God be God Himself in His inmost being and as He passes out from Himself into the world, and if Christ was the *personal Incarnation* of this Spirit, then He was in His personality as truly Divine as human, as truly God as man. In even such a simple statement as this—that Christ was the personal Incarnation of the Spirit—we should have affirmed of Him that pre-existence, on one side of His personality, which it often seems so difficult to grant; we should have said, by implication, that He was Divine as well as human, God as truly as man.

3. Or if, in our anxiety to avoid the "metaphysical" and

to speak in harmony with modern scientific conceptions, we should say that in Christ we behold the final product—not of evolution, but of the great Divine world-process which works as an evolution—He in whom the Divine Idea is realised—we should not thus really avoid “the metaphysical.” For it is implied that, in any such consummation, the Reality that was its ideal source and potency has come into manifestation; that which was last in appearance was first in reality: it is the living Thought of God that is thus realised and manifested in Jesus Christ. This gives us pre-existence on one side of the Person of Christ, and it is only on one side—the Divine side—that such pre-existence has ever been seriously asserted.

4. Or, once more, if we say that God as the Universal Spirit of Life becomes *ethically* incarnated in every Personality as it is opened to Him,—what does it imply when we behold One in whom the Will was *wholly* surrendered to God, and the Personality wholly filled by God from the first? Is not God verily present in this Person as fully as God *can* be present in a human form? Does not such a Person in this complete receptivity of God have a *Divine* side to the personality that is thereby formed, as truly as a human side; and does not this Divine side, which in the case of Christ was present from the very first, carry us up to the Eternal for its explanation?

But let us, with reference to this subject, continue as we have begun, and proceed to inquire, in the first place, what the doctrine of the Person of Christ really is as we find it in the New Testament.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SCRIPTURES ON THE PERSON OF CHRIST

IN seeking to see how the apostles regarded the Person of Christ, we shall, in the first instance at least, again confine ourselves to those scriptures we have previously founded on, desiring, first of all, to know simply what is their actual teaching on this subject.

#### *Paul*

Let us again go, first, to Paul's undoubted Epistles and ask how he preaches Christ. It is almost universally acknowledged to-day that, with Paul—while Jesus is clearly distinguished from God, the origin and source of all existence, and to whom everything is ultimately ascribed—He is distinctly set forth as the Divine Son of God. It was no “crucified Jew” merely that Paul preached—which would neither have attracted the attention nor moved the hearts of men, nor was it the Son of God as an earthly Messiah; but a Christ “after the Spirit,” who, as such, came forth from God and was God’s “*own* Son,” whom He sent into the world. The only question that can be raised is whether Paul regards Jesus as personally pre-existent, or whether he did not rather think of Him as the Son miraculously or specially constituted such through the Holy Spirit or through the Resurrection, while *ideally* pre-existing with God. But modern New Testament theologians, so different in many respects, as Pfleiderer, Weiss, Beyschlag, and Weizsäcker (and having each one

his own explanation of the fact), agree that Jesus is represented in the undoubted Epistles of Paul as personally pre-existent, and the most striking thing, according to Beyschlag (who himself seems to believe only in an *ideal* pre-existence), is the way in which, without any express or formal teaching, this is in the earlier Epistles presupposed as familiar to the apostle's readers, and as disputed by no one; which leads to the inference that it had always belonged to the Christian preaching. But, apart from particular passages, we would point out how *Paul's entire Gospel* implies and requires the entrance into the world in Christ of one who bore within Himself essentially a higher Divine life. Our Redemption is through the impartation of God's Spirit, raising us into the life of His sons and daughters. According to Paul, that Spirit is the Divine element in the world, and sinful man, or man in the flesh, is destitute of it, in practical efficiency. It only enters the world in power in Christ. But that Spirit is the very inner Spirit and life of God Himself—"searching all things, even the deep things of God." Yet it is also the Spirit of Christ, "God's Son"; it is *this* that God sends forth into our hearts, "crying, Abba, Father," when through Christ, the Son, we have been brought into the relation of sons towards Himself. That Spirit, therefore, which belongs to the innermost life of God was the essential principle of the life of Christ as Son of God, and came into the world in the fulness of its power when God "sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." God's Son was He who had essentially His life in God through that Spirit, and He, coming into the world as man, brought that Spirit—His own essential Spirit—to be the life of men, who thus became the sons of God, in the full sense of the word, through Him.

So, writing to the Romans, he says it was "according to the Spirit of Holiness" that Jesus was the Son of God,

while "according to the flesh" He was the son of David (Rom. i. 3, 4). The same truth is implied when he says (Rom. viii. 3), "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." God thus had (with Him or in Him) a Son, whose life was essentially that of "the Spirit," and through sending Him into the world "in the likeness of sinful flesh"—which certainly distinguishes Him *from* "sinful flesh," or man generally—the Spirit came to be the life of men as the sons of God. That this was not merely an *Ideal* Son in the Divine thought to be realised in the future, appears from what the apostle says in the 29th verse: "Whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren," and it was the full revelation of this hidden purpose of God that the whole creation was anxiously awaiting (ver. 19). This foreordination cannot be dated merely from the time when Jesus realised Divine Sonship on the earth, but must be taken as referring to the eternal purpose of God in the creation, and clearly implies the existence with God of that Son in whose image man was created. Therefore, the greatness of the love of God is represented by the fact that "He spared not *Him*—His own (peculiar) Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (ver. 32). This was the great revelation of God's Love; but it did not begin in time, but in eternity. That Love could not be shown in the delivering up of a *faithful man* to die on the Cross (which would have been anything but a proof of the love of *God*), but of one who was, as distinguished from all others, God's "*own Son*."

It was because He was such a Son that Paul says to the Corinthians that "we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. iv. 4–6); and that to have "the mind of the Spirit" and "the

mind of Christ is the same thing" (1 Cor. ii. 15, 16). Christ was the Son who, as such, revealed the Father and brought the Spirit; and therefore God is spoken of as peculiarly "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This Fatherhood was the revelation of God given in His Son.

Therefore also it is, and not merely because He was a man exalted to the right hand of God, that Christ is always conjoined with God as the Giver of Grace and Peace. By a monotheist like Paul, no *man* could have been raised to such a position in relation to the one only God, and we may also say that no *man* could have received the heart-homage and devotion of Paul, who describes himself as "the slave of Jesus Christ." It is true that Jesus was exalted *in His Humanity*, but this was only possible because His life was essentially a Divine life, clothing itself for our sakes in human form. As Paul says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that, though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). He was certainly, to Paul, the exalted *Christ*, and as such the Lord of men; but it is always to be borne in mind that the Christ of Paul was a *spiritual Christ*, which is equivalent to saying a Divine Christ. "The Spirit" is the Divine element in the world.

Therefore, we need not wonder if, when Paul expressly states the object of Christian devotion, Jesus Christ is conjoined with "the one God, the Father," as He "*through whom*" are the "all things" that proceed from the Father (1 Cor. viii. 5, 6). He is here speaking expressly of false or idolatrous worship, of "the Gods many and Lords many" who were falsely regarded as objects of men's devotion, and, unless Christ could have been rightly regarded as a legitimate object of devotion and worship by the Christians who "everywhere called on the name of the Lord Jesus," because He was the Messiah indeed, but as such the Divine Son of God,

they would have been involved in the very idolatry that Paul condemned.

Still, it is always as *the Son* that Christ is regarded by Paul—the Son of whom God the Father is “the Head” and to whom He belongs (1 Cor. xi. 3, iii. 23). He has received the kingdom from God and shall yet deliver up that kingdom again, and, in His mediatorial capacity at least, be subject to the Father, who subjected all things to Him, “that *God* may be all in all” (xv. 28). He is always clearly distinguished from God in Himself. Paul has a Trinity, indeed; but it is always God who does everything *through* the Son and *in* the Holy Spirit. As he says (xii. 4–6): “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, *who worketh all things in all*.” God is always God, and as such distinguished from all else, and Jesus Christ is always *the Son of God*, through whom the Spirit comes to us, as sent forth by God, “of whom, through whom, and unto whom are all things.”

### THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

When we go to the first three Gospels we find Jesus set forth as the Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man. Whatever else these terms may imply, and however they may have arisen, they certainly mean, at least, the Son and Representative of God and the Son and Representative of man. Both, indeed, belong to the very idea of *the Christ*, the Messianic King. The Theocratic King represented God to the people and the people toward God; and the true Christ was He who could do this perfectly. This implies, therefore, a unique relation towards both God and man. He must be at once the Divine Son of God and the true Head of Humanity. His unique rela-

tion towards God is represented in these Gospels by the miraculous birth through the Holy Spirit, which made Him the peculiar Son of God, and by His special endowment with the Holy Spirit on the occasion of His baptism. These, however (to which we will refer again), were the *forms* in which these evangelists represented that which they had seen and found in Christ, and for the truth itself, so far as we can find it, we are thrown back on the record they give of the life and work of Christ, and on His own self-witness as preserved therein.

What is the impression which the life depicted in such a simple and non-impressionist way by these evangelists makes upon us? However we may explain it, we cannot but feel that we are in the presence of that which is absolutely unique in the history of mankind. We behold a life from the first to the last of constant, unqualified devotion to the cause of God and of man, on which rests no single speck or shade of sin, which is darkened by no shadow of self, which (while he bids others repent and be forgiven, and is Himself supremely honest and true) manifests no consciousness of the need of forgiveness, or even of such a closer walk with God as the most eminent saints have longed for; a life of Love which yields to nothing that would oppose its gracious course, but gives itself in such utter self-sacrifice as cannot be transcended even by infinite Love itself. It is a true *man* that passes before us; but we are made to feel that at the foundation of such a life there is something very much more than is revealed in the ordinarily human.

Of Himself, He generally speaks as "*the Son of man*"; and this certainly suggests to us such a relation to men as could not be borne by any ordinary man. Even though the title be a Messianic one, we cannot imagine anyone going about amongst men constantly calling Himself "*the Son of man*," without having something quite exceptional in the depths of His consciousness. His acceptance of Peter's

confession that He was "the Christ, the Son of God," may not have directly anything beyond a Messianic significance ; but His use of the term "the Son" in speaking of Himself (even though still Messianic and justified by such passages as "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee"; and, "of the Son He saith, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever'") assuredly suggests something very exceptional in the consciousness of Him who could apply such a term, in such connections, to Himself. *This* was the remarkable thing about Jesus as depicted in the Synoptists ; that He could simply and naturally take to Himself all the high designations applied to the Messiah and speak of Himself as the Son in relation to that Father of whom He spoke to His disciples as the One only God, never classing Himself along with them even while He bade them look to that God as *their* Father also. Everyone will acknowledge that the distinctive thing in Christ was the consciousness of God He possessed—the consciousness of God as His Father—such as no other man has ever pretended to possess. We would say that this *Sonship* was the very essence or substance of His consciousness, so that, even in the Synoptic Gospels, He appears as *the* Son manifesting the Father to men. In a saying, given both by Matthew and Luke, and so often referred to by Gnostic heretics as well as by the orthodox, that, at the very least, its *derivation* from Christ Himself is almost beyond doubt, this very relationship to God is distinctly claimed : "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27; *vide* also Luke x. 22). No ordinary man could speak like this, however high his knowledge of God. It is not only that He alone knows the Father; but that the Father alone knows Him (as He said to Simon Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which

is in heaven"). Who is this that God alone knows and can reveal to men? Such a saying carries us altogether above the temporal and into the eternal. There is indeed no claim of pre-existence in the form in which we find it in the Fourth Gospel, or as it is asserted by Paul; but is it not implied in such words that He who so speaks belongs not merely to the temporal but to the eternal; not only to the human but to the Divine? He is *the Son* in the same sense as God is *the Father*. And (as with Paul) it is because He is that Son that He can be the Messiah, with power to forgive sins on earth, do the work of God, and be the universal Judge who should come in the glory of His Father and in His own glory, sending forth His angels and pronouncing final doom on individuals and on nations. The personality that could take to itself these functions without the slightest hesitation or misgiving (and if He took to Himself the functions of *the Christ* at all, He took all this) must have been rooted in the Divine in a way transcending all that we see in ordinary men. He could speak of Himself as "meek and lowly"—the very fact that He should do so is suggestive—and yet He could claim all these functions and set Himself forth as the Lord and Master who required the absolute and undivided allegiance of men, in respect too of that which is highest in man. He could urge His claim as superior to all earthly demands and to the nearest and dearest of human ties; and by refusal or acceptance of it men should be judged, and counted worthy or unworthy of eternal life. All this may be Messianic, but who is He who can place Himself in this position in relation to all mankind?

In another special saying given by Mark (xiii. 32) He speaks of "the Son" as above the angels, and as standing in a natural relation to God as the Father: "neither the Son, but the Father only." No doubt the term is Messianic, and the language may be justified by what is said of the

Messiah in the Old Testament; but, none the less would it have been impossible for anyone to take such language to himself unless he possessed such a consciousness as enabled him to do so; and that could only be the consciousness of the Son over against the Father.

In the same way, in the Parable of the Vineyard, He speaks of Himself, in distinction from the prophets, as the one "beloved Son" and "heir," whom the Lord of the Vineyard sent forth at last (Mark xii. 6, 7); and He knows Himself as *that* Christ who should be even "David's Lord" (xii. 35-37).

The whole manifestation in the Synoptic Gospels is, however, at the same time distinctly *human* in its form, and *never* is there any *claim* on Christ's part to be *God*—such as has too often been affirmed of Him, to the great prejudice of the truth. He always distinguishes clearly between Himself in His own Person and "God" or "the Father," who by His "Spirit" dwelt in Him. He prays to God, lives by faith in God, stands loyal in the service of God, experiences conflict between His own natural self and the possible will of God, which, however, he accepts at any cost; and on the Cross He cries, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and dies as a man thereon. In a very solemn passage He emphasises the distinction between Himself and God, where He speaks of the difference between saying anything against "the Son of man," and against "the Holy Spirit," which was the presence of the Father within Him, and the power by which He did His works (Matt. xii. 32; Mark iii. 28; Luke xii. 10). It was always as "the Son" that He thought and spoke of Himself, never as "God." But at the same time the manifestation is, with equal distinctness, that of one whose life is consciously rooted in the Divine, and who is just as "naturally" the Son of God as He is the Son of man. He claims to be "the Son" in relation to God in a sense

entirely transcending all that is ordinarily human. He knows Himself as "*the Son*" of the Divine Father, existing to God as such, naturally and essentially. He never speaks of being *appointed* the Messiah; He is the Christ because He is such Son; and it was only the Spirit of the Father that could reveal the fact to men. He comes forward to and takes up the work naturally as the Son. All throughout, the sense of this unique relationship to God lifts Him above, and, even in some measure, separates Him from, His chosen disciples. As we listen to Him there is ever an accent of *authority* higher than can be assumed by a man towards His brethren; in His most familiar intercourse with His most loved followers there is a veiled dignity, an air of reserve, a hidden majesty, which at times bursts forth so as to overawe the boldest of them. We behold the man, the Messiah, but we feel sure that behind that human presence there is something we have *not* seen; we feel that we are in the presence of one who belongs not to time merely, but to eternity—in short, that in Him *God* is incarnate in our midst.

We have made no reference to the *miracles*, because so many questions might be raised in regard to them. But we are convinced that (as men everywhere are now coming more and more to feel) these mighty works, while not to be received uncritically, cannot be entirely removed from the gospel pages without destroying the record itself; and, if our impression of Christ is well founded, they become the natural expression and manifestation of the Divine *Power* that was present in the world in Him, and which is necessary to our full conception of God. And it must be remembered that He not only did these works Himself, but empowered His disciples to do them also, which we can scarcely conceive as the result of any merely delegated power.

There is, finally, His own Resurrection from the dead which, whatever questions may be raised as to the *form* of

it, as recorded by the evangelists, was to His disciples an absolutely certain fact and the very foundation of the Christian Church. In this respect He stands, again, perfectly unique. Although there have been many extremely good men, none but He has ever come back again as He did "in power" from the dead; and this implies that in His Personality there was something *more* than belongs to any ordinary man.

### *The Fourth Gospel*

We need not dwell on *the Fourth Gospel* at this stage, for it will be generally acknowledged that therein Jesus is, in some form, represented as the Divine Son of God, who came forth from the Father and came into the world. The question of the right interpretation of this Gospel in relation to the Divine Sonship of Christ will yet have to be considered, but it may be here pointed out in the interests of the truth, that some passages commonly quoted from it in support of the Deity of Christ do not necessarily bear the interpretation put upon them. There is, in particular, that saying of our Lord's to the Jews in the 58th verse of the 8th chapter, so persistently rendered, "Before Abraham was, I am"—a sentence which, standing thus, really makes no good sense in its connection. Rendered as the same words (*ἐγώ εἰμι*) are rendered everywhere else in this Gospel, we should read, "Before Abraham was (or was born), *I am (He)*," namely, the Messiah to whose coming Abraham gladly looked forward. Just as He said in the 24th verse, "If ye believe not that I am (He) (the same words), ye shall die in your sins"; and again in the 28th verse, "When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man ye shall know that I am (He)." (See also chaps. ix. 8, xiii. 19, xviii. 5.) To render the words differently in the 58th verse of the 8th chapter *alone*, is only to create prejudice and suspicion in the minds of those who perceive the rendering to be unwarranted, or

at least different from that given to the very same words wherever else they occur. So with respect to another passage commonly quoted: "I and the Father are one" (x. 30). As Dr. Dods remarks (whatever the words may *imply*), "Calvin is unquestionably right in maintaining that these words were not intended to affirm identity of substance with the Father" (*The Gospel of John*, i. p. 342). Indeed, Jesus prays that His disciples may be one as He and the Father are one (xvii. 22). Again, when He says, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," He explains it by the affirmation, "the Father abiding in Me doeth His works" (xiv. 9, 10). We refer to these matters here because we know from experience that the indiscriminate quoting of such passages does a very great deal of harm. It is to be noted also that in this Gospel it is still as the Messiah that Jesus is set forth as the Son of God, and that in no writing is the distinction of the Son from "God," or "the Father," and His dependence on God made more plain. "No man hath seen *God* at any time," we are assured in the Prologue, and in the language ascribed to Jesus Himself, He constantly asserts His dependence on the Father; from whom He came forth, and without whom He can do nothing; from whom He has received all that He has, and whom He describes as "the only God (v. 44, R.V.), and as "the only true God" (xvii. 3). Even after His Resurrection, He can say to His disciples, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (xx. 17). The language He employs concerning Himself in relation to God, however, especially in chaps. xiv.-xvii., and the way in which He speaks of Himself as sending the Holy Spirit, and as coming with the Father to dwell in the hearts of men, make it utterly impossible to think of Him, as represented in this Gospel, as being anything less than the Divine Son who, as He says, in what seemed to His disciples plain words and "no parable," had

"come forth from the Father, and come into the world," and who "left the world and went unto the Father" (xvi. 28-30).

As already remarked, there are many questions concerning the origin, the form, and the method of interpretation of this Gospel still remaining unanswered; but there is a growing tendency to regard it as containing *in some form* materials at least derived from Jesus, and as representing an important side of the earliest evangelical tradition. It seems, indeed, quite impossible to imagine that portion we have specially referred to above (chaps. xiv.-xvii.) as having proceeded (in whatever form) from anyone who was less than Jesus Himself. If, therefore, we are not utterly to reject the Fourth Gospel—if we are to regard it as in any way truly representing the consciousness of Christ (and how much of our highest spiritual Christianity is bound up with that conception), we must look upon Him in His Christian presentation to us, as being in some real sense God incarnate.

Whether, therefore, we go to Paul or to the Synoptists, or to the Fourth Gospel, we find Jesus Christ, through whom the Spirit comes to men in the fulness of the power of a new creation, regarded as the *Divine Son of God*, and (in Paul and John) as coming forth from the Father and entering the world to be the Light and Life of men.<sup>1</sup> Any lower conception of His Person than that of one at once Divine and Human does not give us the gospel as it was preached at first, and as it came in power into the world; any lower form of doctrine does not bring us the fulness of the Spirit. The Christ that was preached as loving men and living and dying for them was not only a man, but also the Divine and eternal Son of God. The question we have now to face is—Can we still believe in Him as such?

<sup>1</sup> There is no need to refer to the teaching of the later New Testament writings, ascribed to Paul and others, on this subject. It will be admitted on all hands that in them Christ is presented as being, in some real sense, the Divine Son of God, and that even, in some of them, His pre-temporal cosmical relations are set forth.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DIVINE SONSHIP OF CHRIST—QUESTIONS AND DIFFICULTIES—THE TRINITY—RELATION TO OUR SONSHIP

WE must ask more particularly, before we can go further, how we are to understand this Eternal Divine Sonship which the Scripture writers affirm of Christ, and which must, in some real sense, be maintained if the gospel is to retain its power and be to us that medium of the Spirit in its fulness which it was to the first Christians. As Dr. Dorner shows in his *History of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, the point the Christian Church felt it necessary from the first to contend for was “that God was in Christ, not merely as a motive power or mere activity, but in a conscious, personal mode of existence of the Deity apart from the ‘Father’; that in the Incarnation the Most High God was present with men and had not withheld the highest, but had communicated Himself without reserve in Christ.” Neither a humanitarian nor an Arian conception of His person would suffice. And this was founded not on any mere letter of the Scriptures concerning Christ, but on the broad facts of His life and work and relation to us as Redeemer. As Eusebius of Cæsarea expressed it: “A Divine Power lived and moved in many men even before the days of Christ: the new element introduced by Christianity is the *personal* indwelling of God.” And the object was the highest conceivable. As Athanasius and others put it, God became human that man might be

raised into the Divine life. It is the need to see the real personal presence of *God* in Christ that gives its importance to the question of His pre-existence—not the mere interest in pre-existence in itself—to see that it was God in a mode of the Divine *existence* who became incarnate in Him. As Dr. Orr has said, what we must see in Christ, in distinction from all other theories, is “the entrance of a Divine Person into the human.” The pre-existence, therefore, that we must ascribe to Him (on one side of His Person) is not merely that in the Divine idea which Professor Harnack says is the only one that can be maintained,<sup>1</sup> but an actual, real pre-existence in God, so that it is not man merely we have in Christ, but God personally incarnate in Him. The “divinely-filled man” which others have suggested is, for the same reason, inadequate. No doubt it is a true description of Christ to say that He was a divinely-filled man; but, besides the necessity for seeing God personally in Him, we have to account for the man who *could* be so divinely filled. How did His Humanity become such a perfect organ of God, and that from the very first?

But can we seriously and with full intellectual conviction believe in Christ to-day as the first Christians came to believe in Him? Many have great and sincerely felt difficulties here, difficulties which are not always adequately appreciated by those who seek to maintain the Christian Faith. It may be not unfairly said, as it is in effect by Professor Harnack, that it was natural, if not inevitable, for Paul and John, under the mingled influences of Jewish and Greek ways of thinking, to believe in the pre-existent Divine Son of God; the influences under which they lived and thought were such as prepared them for this when the spiritual relation in which the risen Christ stood to men had been realised by them. But *we* have grown up under

<sup>1</sup> *History of Dogma*, i. 331, 332 (E. T.).

very different conceptions of God and His relation to the world. Science has so impressed on us the immanence and unity of God, and the controversy with anti-theistic theories has so habituated us to the thought of *God* as a single Being "working all in all," that what was easy and natural for the first Christians may be hard and difficult and seemingly unwarranted for us. Moreover, we must beware of confounding mere *form* with the underlying substance. Endeavours after a merely literal adherence to what we find in Paul and John ought surely never to blind our eyes to the difference between form and substance; otherwise it is possible that we may be found forcing ourselves to accept forms of thought which have no real influence on us, because they are not living elements in our own thinking.

#### NEW TESTAMENT MODES OF REPRESENTATION

It is clear that in those Scriptures which we have had before us there are at least *four* modes of representing the Divine Sonship of Christ. (1) According to the Synoptists, He is the Son of God through a supernatural birth by means of the Spirit, and through the special gift and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (2) According to Paul, He is the pre-existent Son, whose principle of life the Spirit always was, whom God had for ever with Him, or in Him, and whom He "sent into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh." (3) According to the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, He was the "Logos" made flesh; and (4) according to the teaching of Christ Himself in the body of that Gospel, He was the Son *through the indwelling of the Father*—"the Father that dwelleth in Me doeth His (own) works"; which is similar to that which we find in His own teaching in the Synoptic Gospels, namely, that God was in Him through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, with the

addition, however, of Christ's affirmation that *He* also dwelt "*in the Father.*" We may fairly ask, which of these forms are we to adopt? and it is quite possible that there may be underneath them all one substantial truth, and that it is *this* we must seek to grasp and apprehend in the way that shall be to us most effectual.

### 1. *Through the Holy Spirit*

Suppose we take that which may seem the earliest and simplest conception of Christ as the Son of God,—through the indwelling of the Spirit,—how far does this carry us? Other men are also sons of God through the indwelling of the Spirit, but no man was ever a Son of God with such a consciousness of Sonship as Christ possessed. There must have been, at least, such a fulness of the Spirit in Him as constituted Him the Son of God in an altogether unique sense. And, if so, what do we mean by this? What is this Spirit, and how did it come to be *thus* in Christ and in Him only? We are here simply taking the Hebrew mode of speaking of the Divine presence and working in the world—*through the Holy Spirit*, and we must beware of confounding form with substance. How did God so constitute Christ His Son through the Spirit? No doubt there is a sense in which we can rightly speak of Christ as God's great work in the world—"His Masterpiece," as Keim puts it; He was certainly the culmination of all the Divine working in the world. But we cannot think of God as working to produce Christ in some *external* manner; or as, in some outward way, "sending down" and endowing Him with the Holy Spirit. We must not be carried away by mere modes of representation. We must think of the Spirit as belonging to Him *immanently*, and as being, indeed, the essential principle of His life. But the Spirit so regarded really represents, according to Hebrew modes of thought,

that Divine presence and working in the world which, according to Greek thought, based on a different way of conceiving God and His relation to the world, is represented by the *Logos*. In Hebrew thought it was by means of "the Spirit" that God created the world and visited men; in Greek, or Greek-Jewish, thought it was by means of "*the Logos*" that He so acted. The functions ascribed to each are virtually identical.<sup>1</sup> Therefore to think of Christ as being constituted by the Spirit, or as the incarnation of the Spirit, differs in no material sense from conceiving Him as the incarnation of the *Logos*—"the Word made flesh"—and gives us equally a Divine and Eternal side to His essential being, and a real, not merely an ideal, pre-existence in God.

## 2. *The Logos Doctrine*

The mode of thought which prevailed in the early Church was that which regarded Christ as the Incarnation of the pre-existent personal *Logos* through whom God ever manifested Himself and created all things. This was the natural effect of the prevalence of Greek influences, an important element in which was the *Logos* doctrine; and this mode of representation (although it has assimilated to itself the conception of Christ as the Eternal *Son*) is still dominant in theology. But—

1st. It is extremely difficult to say *for certain* how the *Logos* in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel is to be understood—whether it is to be taken personally or is only

<sup>1</sup> Thus, *e.g.*, of the *Spirit* in the O.T. Dr. Davidson can write: "The Spirit of God *ab extra* is God exerting power, God efficient, that is, actually exerting efficiency in any sphere" (*Expos. Times*, xi. 22); and of the *Logos* or *Word* Dr. Dods can say: "The Word of God is God's power, intelligence, and will in expression—God's Word is His will going forth with creative energy and communicating life from God, the source of life and being," etc. (*The Gospel of St. John*, p. 7).

personified. On this subject there is great diversity of opinion, and probably we can never get beyond *opinion* concerning it, however firmly we may hold our own opinion. And even though we could be positively certain as to the sense in which the term is used in the Prologue, we should still, especially in the uncertainty that prevails in some respects concerning the authorship of this Gospel and of the Prologue in particular, be possibly only dealing with human, perhaps philosophical, *opinion*, and with what is merely a *mode* of representing the pre-existent Divine in Christ. The term was a common one in the philosophy of the time; it originated in a view of God which held direct contact with the world on His part to be impossible,—only to be mediated through the Logos,—and it is to be noted that it never occurs in the body of the Gospel.

2nd. While there is no doubt that in the prevailing theology of the early Church the Logos was taken as personal, it is also a fact that that conception, as it was then embraced,—while it served most important purposes for the time, and embodies, for all time, an important truth,—was attended by some unfortunate results. Not to speak of the support which fantastic Gnostic systems may have drawn from it, its general result, as it was taken up by Justin and others, was in some respects unfruitful and even misleading. Dr. Dorner has pointed out the great gain there was to the Church when “the age of Logology was succeeded by the age of Sonship,” and he speaks of its “inability adequately to convey and to preserve the Christian thought.”<sup>1</sup> But, as Dr. Harnack remarks, “the most questionable result was that the holy and divine element (the power of a new life in Christ) was transformed into a cosmic force and thereby secularised.”<sup>2</sup> It tended to

<sup>1</sup> *Person of Christ*, ii. 79 (E. T.).

<sup>2</sup> *History of Dogma*, i. 330 (E. T.).

remove Christ from a real relation to men in the specifically Christian sense. And, although these results were so far corrected when the idea of "the Son" was made to predominate over that of the Logos, the Son was, and still is, in the prevailing theology, identified with this Logos ; and if we take the idea of a personal Logos or Son existing as in some sense *a separate Person* with God, or the Father (in something like the human sense of the word "Person"), through whom, as Instrument, God created all things, and who was the Person that became incarnate in Christ, we are, *without going outside the sphere of the Scriptures*, met by another and still more serious difficulty, which has received surprisingly little attention in discussions concerning the Person of Christ. The difficulty is this—

3rd. Whereas, according to the common interpretation of the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, and in the prevailing theology, all things are said to have been created by, or through, the Logos or Son as a Person with God, who goes forth from God to accomplish that work ; by *Christ Himself*, both in the Synoptists and in the Fourth Gospel, creation is invariably ascribed to *God*, or *the Father*. In the Synoptists it is the Father who does everything—"your Father," as Jesus says. It is the Father who clothes the lilies in their robes of beauty, feeds the birds of the air, makes His sun to shine and His rain to fall on the good and evil alike; it is He who, as God, is the hearer of prayer and the Giver of the Holy Spirit. Christ Himself appears before us on their pages as the direct product of the creative Spirit of God, and it is the indwelling Holy Spirit that is the Divine element in the Son of man. In the body of the Fourth Gospel too it is the Father who does everything in nature and in man—"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." It is the Father who teaches men prior to the appearance of the Son, and, moving in men's hearts, draws them to the Son. The Son appears as "sent

by the Father" and as taking up the Father's work. He can do "nothing of Himself, save what He sees the Father doing." It is the Father who sustains and glorifies the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does. Nowhere do we have a hint of such a doctrine as that of creation by a personal Logos or Son separate from God, as is commonly believed to be taught in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel. It may be said that the Father created all things *through* the Son; but, if the Son or Logos be taken as a separate person with God, who becomes, as such, the Agent of the Father in the creation, why should this Son or the Logos, when He becomes incarnate, manifest no consciousness whatever of such creative activity, but, on the contrary, invariably ascribe all that theology has ascribed to the personal Logos directly to the Father—never in the remotest way to Himself? This constant ascription of all creative work and all pre-Christian illumination to *the Father* is sufficient to make us quite certain that, if we would not have a contradiction between Christ's own teaching and that of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, we must not take the Logos in the sense of a person who was with the Father in anything like the human sense of the word "person." If the writer intended to speak of a personal Logos who as such became the Instrument in the creation, we must regard the view—whencesoever the writer derived the term—as intended to help Greek readers (for whom the Gospel was certainly written, and to whom the idea of the Logos was familiar) to believe in Christ as the Divine Son of God. So far as the language of the Prologue is concerned, there is no absolute necessity for so taking it, and the writer is careful to say that the Logos while "with ( $\pi\rho\sigma$ , toward, it might even mean 'pertaining to') God" was God; yet the general strain of the Gospel may suggest that the writer did mean to speak of a personal Logos in something like the Greek-Jewish sense of the term; or,

possibly, like Philo, he may have "wavered" in his thought between the personal and the impersonal.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. *The Son of God*

It was to teach that Jesus was "the Son of God" that the Fourth Gospel was written (John xx. 31), and it is always as "the Son" that Jesus knows and speaks of Himself. What are we to say then of this *Sonship* as set forth in this Gospel? That Jesus is here represented as having come from God and as having had, *in some sense*, a real pre-existent Divine life with, or in, God, there can be no doubt. It is true that we cannot take in a literal manner some of the forms in which this is set forth, such as "coming down from heaven" (although on the Divine side He certainly came from heaven in the true spiritual sense of the word), and that, as already pointed out, some passages which are often supposed to affirm pre-existence cannot be so regarded. Jesus Himself says in that Gospel that He spake many things "in parables," and sayings that have been interpreted metaphysically may be susceptible rather of a spiritual interpretation. Yet the fact remains that He Himself taught, according to this Gospel, in, as His disciples believed, "plain words and no parable," that, in some real sense, He "proceeded forth from the Father and came into the world," and, as already said, it is impossible to regard His presentation by this evangelist as other than as the *Divine Son of God*.

It is doubtful, however, whether it is *as the Son who*

<sup>1</sup> If the term be traced to Philo or to Greek-Jewish philosophy in general, the uncertainties that we have referred to meet us. If a Biblical origin be found for it, in the "Word" by which all things were created (in Genesis), or "the Wisdom" that was with God at the creation (in Proverbs), then we have, certainly, an impersonal or personified use of the term Logos.

appears to and speaks with His disciples, that He is to be regarded as pre-existent, and whether we can transfer simply and directly what is said of "the Son" to a prior state of existence. "The Son," even "the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father" (the evangelist writing retrospectively), is rather *the Divine-human Person* who appears in the flesh. The Sonship in this Gospel is still the Messianic Sonship, although certain new and peculiar elements enter into the conception. It is an *ethical* Sonship, consisting in an abiding in the Father in love, and having thus also His Father abiding in Him —(the true perichoresis)—such as gives a unity with the Father similar to that which the Saviour prays may be realised on the part of His disciples. He is the Son because He does always the Father's will as the Father shows it Him—He does always the things that please the Father. He is the Father's Son in the same ethical sense in which the Jews *might* have been the sons of the Father, but were the children of the evil one (John viii. 38, 54, 55). He was the Son who abode in the Father's love by doing His commandments, even as His disciples should abide in His love by keeping His word; the Son who lived "*through* the Father," even as they should live through Him.<sup>1</sup> All this, and the whole language of the Fourth Gospel (as, indeed, we have seen in the case of the Synoptists also), implies something perfectly unique and truly Divine on one side of His nature, a real incarnation of God in Him. But, of course, it is only of one side of His nature—the Divine side—that pre-existence can be

<sup>1</sup> As Dr. Stevens remarks in his *Theology of the New Testament* (while maintaining an absolutely unique Sonship with an ontological implication): "In both forms of the evangelical tradition the title (Son of God) retains its historical basis. It denotes one who is the special object of God's complaisant love. The relation to God which it emphasises is not primarily ontological, but ethical. It denotes a reciprocal and dynamic fellowship" (p. 204, see also p. 211).

affirmed; the human side was certainly born in this world. And, if we simply carry up what He says of "*the Son*" into the Divine and Eternal sphere, and apply to Him literally, as if to a Person in anything like the human sense, what is said about coming forth from the Father and about pre-existence in general, it will give us a *distinctly separate, subordinate, and dependent existence with God*. This conception of a subordinate and dependent Son who comes into the world at once to reveal the Father and the true Sonship of man has about it much that is attractive, and seems to many to be according to the *letter* of both Paul and John. The subordination of the Son was, in some form, for long held in the early Church, and it was thus that the *unity* of God as the Supreme Being was thought to be preserved. It has also been embraced by some modern theologians, and it has in it an element of truth not to be overlooked. But it is encompassed by many grave difficulties. It need not be Arian—since it is a *Divine Son* that is affirmed—but it has always tended towards Arianism, and it is inconsistent both with the full and proper Godhead of Him who appears in the flesh, and with the unity of God. If there be a Son like this with the Father, then there are *two persons* in the Godhead in the fullest individual sense of the word person. It seems also quite inconsistent with the genuine *humanity* of Christ and with the representations given of Him in the Synoptic Gospels. We would seem thus to get simply a pre-existent Divine Person *appearing* in human form, not really "entering our humanity"; not that "Son of God come *in the flesh*" which is in the First Epistle of John affirmed to be the Christian doctrine as opposed to the Antichristian. Besides, as already remarked, the pre-existence cannot possibly be affirmed of the complete personality; for we know that the *humanity* was born into the world and began to be *in time*. Even

though we say that He was eternally "a Divine *man*," it would still seem, unless He is to be altogether detached from our actual humanity in this world, that it is only to the Divine element in His personality that pre-existence can be ascribed. Moreover, what significance would the death of this Divine Being, appearing in human form, have for us, save as a manifestation of the love of God? In no way can He be that *representative* "Son of man," bearing the sins of His brethren, which the evangelical doctrine has always seen in Christ. He does not thus spring from, nor has He any organic connection with, our humanity. *From the Divine side*, too, it is inadequate; for the very interest of the Christian belief lies in the fact that in Christ we see *God Himself* obeying His own Law of Righteousness, and giving Himself to carry out His gracious eternal purpose. It must be *God* and not, in any sense, a person separate from God. The Gospel according to John, it is to be observed, says nothing about *how* this Divine Person came into the world; there is no hint even of a supernatural birth; Jesus is spoken of simply as "a man," "a man whose father and brothers we know," "a man who has told you the truth"; which has suggested to some that, possibly, the idea of a general pre-existence of souls, such as Origen held in later times, and the pre-existence of the Logos in particular, may underlie the presentation. Although, as we have said, there is no absolute necessity for taking the Logos in the Prologue in a personal sense, and the evangelist is careful to identify the Logos with God, yet it cannot be denied that the whole strain of the Gospel suggests that it is probable that the writer held the doctrine of a pre-existent personal Logos, and so presented the life and sayings of Jesus as to recommend Him as a pre-existent Divine Son to Greek readers. This supposition would be in harmony with what is now commonly recognised by men of every school, that the presentation of

Christ in this Gospel is dominated, or more or less coloured, by the writer's own views. He sees and gives prominence to that pre-existent Divine element in the person of Christ which is *implied* in the presentation of Him in the other Gospels, although not distinctly seen by their writers; but he gives expression to it in *a form of his own*, familiar to the men of his day, namely, that of the Logos doctrine. By him Jesus, as Son of God, is identified with the pre-existent Logos, who was also spoken of as the "Son of God." It is by this identification that he vindicates the pre-existent Divine nature of Christ; Christ's words and works are all cast in this mould, and He is thus presented to the Greek reader as the Divine "Son of God." But it is quite clear that, if we simply transfer what is said in this Gospel of "the Son" to the Divine and Eternal sphere, we get such a dependent and subordinate Son with God as is hard, if not impossible, to reconcile with the Divine unity, with the true Deity of Christ, and with His real humanity.<sup>1</sup> That the Sonship of Christ was fundamentally ethical does not make it the less truly a *Divine Sonship*; on the contrary, if God is essentially an Ethical Being, as Christianity teaches, an Ethical Sonship is the only possible really Divine Sonship. "The ethical is also the ontological;" and thus there may be a real eternal Sonship in God of which Jesus Christ was the realisation and manifestation in this world, and to which the presentation of Christ, in this Gospel in particular, leads us up. That this is so we shall yet endeavour to show.

#### 4. *The Trinity and Unity of God*

We have already touched on another difficulty strongly felt by many, which calls for separate treatment, the serious

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dorner remarks: "Were this person (Jesus Christ) regarded as simply and immediately pre-existent, to be transposed into the Divine essence, there is no escape from polytheism" (*Person of Christ*, i. 290).

consideration of which may lead us toward the truth we are seeking. There are many who are wholly unable to accept that doctrine of "*the Trinity*" (as it is commonly stated) which belief in an Eternal Sonship in God, and in the Deity of Christ, and a real, personal incarnation of God in Him, is understood to involve (and to which, in some real sense, we are undoubtedly led), because it seems to them inconsistent with the universally acknowledged fact of the *unity* of God, expressly taught by Christ Himself. Ordinary thought, indeed, seems quite content to rest in an undiluted Tritheism. For the way in which the Father, *and* the Son (or Christ), *and* the Holy Spirit are spoken of generally, is as if each were as distinct and separate a person in the Godhead as Peter, John, and Paul were distinct and separate persons in humanity. And it is inevitable to speak thus of the Son incarnate at least, for Jesus Christ, the object of our faith, is a real, historically manifested person distinct from the Father. Theology, of course, will not accept Tritheistic representations, any more than the language of Scripture or the truth of the unity of God will permit of them. The early Church contended as earnestly against Tritheism as against Sabellianism. It is also now generally acknowledged that the Trinity of the New Testament is not, in itself, the ontological one of speculative theology, but the practical or œconomical one of God, the Father, revealed in Jesus Christ, His Son, and present in the Holy Spirit. There is, indeed, a real Trinity in the Divine existence—not merely, as Sabellianism teaches, in the Divine history or Divine manifestation, but in the Divine being itself; Christian faith cannot but think of God as Triune—as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—but the true Trinity *cannot be Tritheistic*.

This is a matter on which we may well dwell for a little; for nothing has done more to turn men away from the Evangelical Faith than the manner in which the doctrine

of a Trinity of Divine persons in the Godhead has often been presented ; and a clear conception of the truth intended to be expressed by this doctrine will, more than anything else, perhaps, help us to a right conception of the Person of Christ. The *unity* of the personal God is on all hands an accepted fact, and *this in itself* shows, as Dr. Dorner—who<sup>1</sup> has dealt in earnest with the contradictions involved in the popular doctrine of the Trinity—has remarked, “that ‘person’ cannot be applied to the members of the Trinity in the same sense as it is to the one personal God.” If the *one God* is a personal Being, then, manifestly, the several members that compose the Godhead cannot be personal in the same sense in which the one God is personal ; for this would give us more than one personal God. The more careful Trinitarian writers, therefore, have earnestly maintained that God is *numerically* one ; that the word “person” is not employed with reference to the Trinity in the same sense as it is applied to human persons ; that, in the words of Professor Moses Stuart in his famous controversy with Dr. Channing, “we use the word ‘person’ merely from the poverty of language to designate our belief in a real distinction in the Godhead ; and not to describe independent, conscious beings possessing separate and equal essences and perfections.” He says that he could wish the word “person” had never come into the symbols of the Churches, because it has been the occasion of so much unnecessary dispute and difficulty ; and that what was aimed at by the use of it was simply to assert “the idea of a real distinction in the Godhead as opposed to the Sabellianism which made Father, Son, and Holy Spirit merely attributes of God, or the names of different ways in which He revealed Himself to mankind, or of different relations which He bore to them and in which He acted.” Augustine tells us that the expression “three persons” was employed, “not that it

<sup>1</sup> In his *System of Christian Doctrine*.

might be spoken, but that it might not be left unspoken." He says that Scripture does not say "three *persons*"; that the use of such terms arose from the necessity of meeting the heretics; and that by their use, "diversity was not meant, but only singleness denied." "For God is more truly thought than He is uttered, and exists more truly than He is thought" (*De Trinitate*, Bks. v. viii.). Similarly, to take a recent writer, the late Dr. James Candlish tells us that "we use the word 'person,' not in the sense it has when applied to men, but in a modified and quite special sense. We employ it to denote a mysterious distinction in the Divine Being that Scripture makes known to us, the nature of which we cannot positively conceive. . . . The word 'person' is only a distant and imperfect analogy,—a term thrown out at an object which we cannot grasp in thought . . . our use of it does not mean that there are three persons in the same sense in which we speak of three men as three human persons. Indeed," he continues,—and we prefer to state the facts in the words of this well-accredited writer,—"it is only in modern times that this meaning of the word person [as applied to human *individuals*] has become common: at the time when it was first applied to the Godhead, it was quite correct to say that one man might unite in himself three persons, that is, parts or characters;<sup>1</sup> and the difficulty then felt about the word was that it seemed to make the distinctions in the Godhead too slight; though in modern times, if understood in its ordinary sense, it makes them too great. The fact is, that it was adopted to denote something intermediate between the ancient and the modern meaning."<sup>2</sup> The importance of the subject will justify yet another quotation from a modern authority. Dr. Schaff writes in his

<sup>1</sup> [The word was originally derived from the mask (*persona*) through which the actors in a play represented their various parts.]

<sup>2</sup> *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 29, 30.

*Creeds of Christendom*: “In modern philosophical usage, the term *person* means a separate and distinct rational individual. But the Tri-personality of God is not a numerical or essential trinity of three beings like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for this would be Tritheism; nor is it only, on the other hand, merely a threefold aspect and mode of manifestation in the Sabellian or Swedenborgian sense; but it is a real, objective, and eternal, though ineffable distinction in one Divine Being.”<sup>1</sup> And, once more, to quote from a more recent writer, Professor Allen says, in a note to his remarks on the Athanasian Creed in his *Christian Institutions* (p. 321): “The word *persona* as used in the Athanasian Creed carried at first the meaning of function or office, nearly equivalent to the Greek πρόσωπον. Thus in early English it became *parson*. But the modern English *person* is equivalent to an individual, and thus is very remote from the original Latin *persona*, and its use in the Creed accounts in some measure for the popular Tritheistic view of the Deity.” He quotes Canon Liddon as saying in his Bampton Lectures “that the term cannot be used without considerable intellectual caution”; and adds: “If the word *person* as used in this Creed may be taken as the equivalent of personality, which is something larger than mere individuality, it would not inadequately represent the force of the Greek ἵπόστασις as understood by the Greek Fathers of the fourth century.”<sup>2</sup>

The point is that the signification of “*person*” as

<sup>1</sup> *Creeds*, etc., ii. 70, quoted by Dr. Whyte in his *Commentary on the Shorter Catechism*.

<sup>2</sup> In a still more recent work, *Outline of Christian Theology*, by Dr. W. N. Clarke, it is said: “In early Christian discussions it was never meant that there were three modernly conceived persons in God, nor can it now be maintained. God . . . has but one personality in the sense which that word now bears. God is one Person. We maintain this in our argument for Theism, and must not deny it in our theology” (pp. 170, 171).

In his article on ‘God’ in the *Dictionary of the Bible*, Dr. Sanday says :

applied to human individuals is distinctly disclaimed, and instead of it "distinctions" are affirmed in the Divine nature. The word "person" as applied to the Trinity does not denote a numerical, threefold personality; there are *not* three persons in the sense in which we speak of human beings as persons. It may be said that this is obvious; but it is by no means adhered to when the subject is the Deity of Christ. If it were always clearly presented and *held to* much misconception would be obviated, and much mental suffering would be spared to some, anxious to find the truth, but unable either to believe in a Tritheistic Trinity, or to see how a merely Sabellian Trinity of manifestation or of history meets the requirements of the case. And even in some of the best modern writers we get representations of the Godhead inconsistent with the foregoing statements, as, *e.g.*, in that which is called "the Social Trinity," and in the "three points of consciousness" said to exist in the Divine nature. Now, first, if we carry up what is said of "the Son" purely and simply into the Divine and Eternal sphere, we have a person as distinct and separate from the Father as one human person is from another. We have really a Ditheism, or two Gods, although the Son is made subordinate to the Father. For what can be more individually personal than a Son who can be sent by the Father on a definite mission into the world; who always, *as such Son*, thinks and speaks of the Father as having sent Him,—whose will, and not His own, He always seeks to do, who, in short, manifests every conceivable attribute of a perfectly separate person from that Father. And, secondly,

"The three Persons are not three individuals. There are not three Gods, but one God."

According to *Athanasius* and others, the "Logos" or "Son" was the Reason, Wisdom, Word, living Will and Energy of the Father. What would be left to "the Father" if His Reason, Wisdom, Word, Will, etc., were made a separate Person from Himself, or a Person in the modern sense of the word?

the language employed in the Scriptures respecting "the Son" in His relation to the Father implies such distinct *subordination* as would be wholly irreconcilable with the accepted doctrine of "coequal persons in the Godhead." Whether we go to Paul or to John, "the Son" is never identified with the Father or with "God," but is invariably a person existing in a dependent and subordinate relation to God. "To us (Christians)," says Paul, "there is *one God*, the Father, and *one Lord*, Jesus Christ," whose "Head" God is, and who is yet to be subjected to God who put all things under Him, that *God* may be all in all. Even in the later Epistles ascribed to Paul this distinction and subordination are fully maintained. Thus in the famous Christological passage in Phil. ii. "the Son" while He was "in the form of God" did not count "equality with God a thing to be grasped at," and He only received "the name which is above every name" as the reward of His self-humiliation.<sup>1</sup> And in Colossians (i. 13–20) Christ is "the Son of His love," "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation," in whom all things were created, and in whom it was "*the good pleasure of the Father* that all the fulness should dwell." While, as we have said, it might be perfectly natural for Paul thus to think and speak of "the Son" who was for ever with God, it is difficult for us to do so; and such language, while it is certainly not Arian, cannot be harmonised with any doctrine of "coequal persons in the Godhead." It is the same in the Fourth Gospel. In the Prologue it is said plainly, "No man hath seen *God* at any time." "God," Jesus Himself said, "is Spirit." Spirit is wholly invisible, and it was of *Him*—that invisible and indwelling God and Father, that Jesus the

<sup>1</sup> I cannot persuade myself that ἀπταγμός has here a "*passive force*," although such may seem to suit the immediate context. But if it be so taken, then "to be equal with God" must be regarded as defined by "in the form of God."

Son of God was the visible manifestation ; as He says, " The Father who dwelleth in Me, He does His (own) works," *i.e.* in and through Me. In that sense, the only possible sense, they who saw Him saw the Father. It is always the Father who is " God," " the only God," " the only true God," who "*sent*" Jesus Christ as His Son into the world. Again and again He ascribes everything to the Father, and declares that the Son " can do nothing of Himself." In plain words He says, " The Father is greater than I "; and even after His resurrection, He can say to Mary, " I go to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." Here we have a personality of " the Son " affirmed which, if we make *this* Son a person in the Godhead, gives such a *separate* twofold personality therein as would be wholly inconsistent with that non-Tritheistic Trinity which is the Christian doctrine.

From the foregoing it seems perfectly plain that, if we are to be true to the teaching of Scripture, and, above all, to that of Christ Himself, we cannot take " the Son," any more than " the Logos," as representing a person in the Godhead in anything like the modern sense of the word " person." Nor can we interpret what Jesus says of pre-existence, as if it applied to His complete personality. It would, moreover, be out of harmony with the spirit of the Fourth Gospel so to interpret His language; for much that is said therein is to be spiritually understood. The Sonship in God, therefore, cannot be defined (as it often is) as if it were simply the pre-existing of Him who was known in the flesh as Jesus " the Son," or " the Christ."

### 5. *The Indwelling Father*

In what way then are we to conceive of and express the reality of that Divine element in Christ, which undoubtedly pre-existed in God; which made Christ, in a

unique sense, "the Son" and the real incarnation of God in the world; and which gave Him the consciousness of having come from God and of having pre-existed in God? It was this Divine element personally incarnate in Christ which Paul conceived as "the Son" with God, which the author of the Fourth Gospel spoke of as "the Logos" or Word, which the Synoptists spoke of as "the Spirit," and which Christ Himself in the body of this Gospel called "*the Father in Me*"—the Father who so dwelt in Him as to constitute Him His unique Son and personal manifestation in the world. We hold it best, and in every way most helpful, to keep to *Christ's own thought* as given in the Fourth Gospel, especially as this is in full agreement with His words as reported in the first three Gospels, when in very solemn terms He speaks of the Divine within Him as the indwelling "Holy Spirit." Indeed, it is only thus that we are able to see really and truly *God*, and not a person in some sense separate from Him of whom Jesus constantly speaks as the one only God and Father, personally present and verily incarnate in Christ, so that we have in Him *the actual presence of the living God Himself in human form*. This does not mean, however, that "the Father" was not also transcendent. He who spake thus, in all things looked up to and prayed to "the Father," came from and went to the Father. It can only mean that the Father or the eternally personal God, was in Him by His Spirit or Logos or Divine outgoing and indwelling to a personal degree, and it implies a distinction in the Divine nature. "The Father" was, with Jesus, the name of *God*, and the distinction implied is not *from* God, but *in* God. As we shall yet see more fully, it implies a real, personal pre-existence of the Divine element in Christ—an eternal Sonship *in* God (or in the Divine nature), which was incarnate in Jesus Christ.

## RELATION TO OUR SONSHIP

Before proceeding to speak of the eternal Sonship in God, there is another difficulty of a different kind to which we must briefly refer. The Unitarian and Theist earnestly urge that by making Christ the eternal Son of God and elevating Him into membership in a Trinity of Divine Persons, we not only contradict Christ's own teaching concerning the unity of God, but also that, in the words of Professor Upton, "in maintaining the wholly exceptional and unique character of the Incarnation in the Son of Mary," we are "really undermining the rational ground of the inestimable worth of his character and his teaching as a revelation and realisation of those divine possibilities of spiritual insight and of felt communion with God which are implicit in every rational soul." God, we are told, is the substance of every human soul, and it was not Jesus only who was of the same substance with the Father, "the same is true of the innumerable persons that proceed from, but still remain in living union with, the Indwelling Eternal" (*Hibbert Lectures*, 1893, pp. 138, 140, 141). This, however, is based on a misconception of the Christian doctrine of the Eternal Son. It is the teaching of both Paul and John, and of Christian theology in general, that the Eternal Son is *the Ideal of all Sonship and the means of its realisation in us all*. If we realise the truth that Divine Sonship is in its essence *ethical* we shall see that, far from Christ's Sonship (even if taken in the most personal sense) overshadowing ours, it is the revelation of our sonship in its eternal truth in God and the means of its complete realisation in all men. The essential truth that is revealed in the Sonship of Christ is that Sonship towards God is *ethical* in its nature, and that God, or the Father, is essentially ethical Being. Hence the Christian doctrine that God is Love, Holy Spiritual Love.

We have here the correction of that error, common to the pagan pre-Christian world, that seems to be repeated by some in our time who speak of a universal Sonship and Incarnation, because all souls participate in one Divine substance. What Christ reveals and Christianity declares is that the real substance of God is ethical and not physical, vital, or "rational" merely, and that we are only, in the highest sense, sons of God as we rise into and share in that ethical life of God which was manifested in its fulness in Jesus Christ. But, *just because* Divine Sonship is ethical, the Sonship of Christ in no sense overshadows ours, but is the revelation of its Ideal for every man, and shows us how it is possible for God to have any number of sons sharing in the real substance of the Father after the image of Christ and through the indwelling of His Spirit, in relation to whom Christ shall be "the firstborn among many brethren," as the one wholly perfect and unique Son of God in whom God was incarnate in human form. It is because this ethical Sonship realised itself in Christ as in no one else that He stands for ever forth as the only-begotten and unique Son of God in whom the eternal Sonship in the image of which we are all created (but which in us has been marred through sin, and was in danger of being lost) was realised and manifested. He is not a Son who, in any measure bars out the Sonship of others, nor does the Incarnation of God in Him, in any sense, narrow a real universal Incarnation; but in Him the true Sonship of man to God is realised, its eternal ground in God Himself revealed, and the Incarnation of God in man manifested in its true ethical nature; while in Him, at the same time, is provided the chief means by which such Incarnation can become, in some real measure, actual in all men.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ETERNAL SONSHIP IN GOD

WE would begin this chapter by protesting against the tendency to decry any inquiry into the relation of the Person of Christ to God and into the Divine nature as being "metaphysical," and, it is implied, uncertain and useless. Traditional and purely subjective Metaphysics has no doubt often exercised an adverse influence on Theology. But it is surely both legitimate and necessary to draw inferences from what is immediately seen and known to that which lies behind it. We observe, for example, certain effects of the Sunlight: it enables us to see, it gives warmth, it also causes vegetable growth. How can we fail to draw the inference that there is something in the nature of the Light that accounts for each of these manifestations. There is a threefold nature of Light, and we seek to understand it. We may be wrong in some of our inferences, just as, not long ago, it was common to say that the Light contained separate luminous rays, heat rays, and vital or actinic rays, but now it is held that these three are one, belonging essentially to Light as Light, each a real quality of the Sunlight. But we cannot avoid inferring a threefold nature of Light, and the erroneous elements in our inferences may be corrected. So, if in Christ, in the world, and in ourselves we behold certain distinct manifestations of God, we are bound to conclude that there must be that in the Divine nature which can account for these manifestations. A man may certainly be a Christian, and

yet refuse to draw these inferences; but just as one who should stop at the simple observance of the phenomena of the Light would be comparatively unenlightened intellectually, so the Christian who refuses to draw these inferences respecting the Divine nature from its manifestations may fail to gain such knowledge of God as he might possess, and to experience the full power of the Divine spiritual influences as they would operate on him, did he stand in full view of the truth.

While Jesus Christ simply knew Himself, in His Divine-human personality, as the Son who came from God to do the works of God in the world, and while, therefore, instead of speaking of Him as if He had, in His entire personality, pre-existed as a *separate* Son or Logos with God, we adopt His own mode of describing the Divine element in His Person as "the Holy Spirit" or "the Father" in Him,—His whole appearance, consciousness, work, and permanent relation to us imply a real, personal incarnation of God. We see in Him not merely a man dwelt in by God as other men may be in greater or less degree, but one in whom God is, in one aspect of His Being, *personally* incarnate—not merely "God in man," but God *as man*, or the God-man. But this, again, implies a real distinction in the Divine nature. For it was certainly not God in His absolute Infinite Being, or that which Theology terms "the Father," who was so incarnate in Christ—"no man hath seen God at any time"—but God as in some way distinguished from Himself, and as He had gone out into the life of the world. Therefore, if we are really to see God in Christ, in the special and unique sense implied in the Christian faith, we must believe in a distinction in the Divine nature; and, although the Sonship that Christ was conscious of in the flesh is not to be identified with a prior *separate* Sonship in God, it may be best regarded as an *essential* Sonship, and as the manifestation of something

eternal in God. It was an ethical Sonship; but the ethical is also the ontological. It was God in that aspect of His Being that may be best described as Sonship who became incarnate in Jesus Christ, and Christ had thus, on one side of His Person, not merely an ideal, but a real pre-existence in God.

#### I. FROM THE HISTORICAL MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN CHRIST

(1) Perhaps the clearest and most self-evidencing view of the necessity for making such a distinction in our thought of God is that arising from the actual historical manifestation of God in Christ, which is, of course, the real foundation of the doctrine. If we regard Jesus Christ as the supreme manifestation of God in the world, and see Him to be, in any real sense, *the Incarnation of God*, so as to behold *God's* love revealed in His sacrifice, and not merely man's, we must distinguish between God as He was *in Christ* and God in His transcendency, or "the Father," as Christ stood in conscious relation to Him. The distinctive mark of God as He was in Christ was Sonship, while that of God, as Christ stood in relation to Him, was Fatherhood. In Christ, therefore, we see God as Son, standing in relation to God as Father.

#### 2. FROM THE CREATION ITSELF

(2) But Christ in this view was the supreme manifestation of God as He enters into the world, and the creation itself necessitates us to make the same distinction between God as He is immanent in the world and God as He transcends the world. If we are to be true to the teaching and manifested experience of Christ and to the abiding requirements of the religious life, we must firmly believe

that "in God we live and move and have our being," that "the Father which is in secret" is near us each moment, and that it is in relationship to Himself our religious life of Sonship is to be lived. But God is also manifested as the immanent life of the world of which man is the crown and head. It is only because God is so manifested in the world that we have any evidence of God or any knowledge of Him outside our own immediate experience. Therefore there must be a distinction between God as He is in the world, the life of the world, and of ourselves, and God as we draw near to Him, pray to Him, trust in Him, and live to Him as our Father,—which we do in virtue of His immanent life as it rises in us.

The creation is before us as, in some real measure, a manifestation of God; but, if we are to think of it as really revealing *God*, while yet we do not pantheistically identify God with the world, or lose Him in it as the mere "spirit of nature," we must distinguish between God as He exists in Himself and God as He goes out from Himself into the creation. There is a real (though increasing) immanence of God in the world, yet we can never identify God with the world. As Dr. Martineau has said, "the Eternal is greater than all He has done." While the immanence of God in the world alone can account for the world, unless we believe in the transcendency of God, we lose God in the world. Therefore, God, as He "*of* whom are all things," must be distinguished from God "*through* whom are all things," although this distinction must not be pressed, as it has often been, the length of making two separate Divine persons in anything like the human sense of the word person. But, if we are to believe in a living God at all—a God *above* the world and not merely in it like a world-soul, we must distinguish between God as immanent and God as transcendent, while yet we discern *God* in both of these aspects.

*Reconciliation with Theism*

It is here that we may find, so far, the reconciliation of the Christian conception with that of the Theist. He believes strongly in the immanent God manifested in the creation. But (as Dr. Martineau has pointed out in his *Way out of the Trinitarian Controversy*) this is not really "the Father" in the Christian sense (that is, in the sense of theology), but "the Son"; although, as we have seen, it is the Father in one aspect of His Being and action. It is not God as He is in Himself in His transcendence, but God as He has gone out from Himself into the creation, and as He is manifested by the creation. The immanent God is God as Son—God as He continuously enters the world's life, reaching His goal in and through Christ; the transcendent God is God as Father, infinite, and in His depth unsearchable.

## 3. THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD

(1) If we take now Paul's conception of the Son of God as the expression in the world of that Holy Spirit which is the innermost life of God, or John's idea of the Logos as that through which God speaks forth His Thought and reveals Himself, we can see the reasonableness of that which underlies these conceptions. God is Spirit; but Spirit is in itself invisible and unknowable: to be known it must give expression to itself. Not only so; but even to exist as living, active Spirit it must give expression to itself. Again to quote Dr. Martineau (*ibid.*), the very essence of the Divine perfection is "not to remain self-enclosed. . . . God has never slept, but always lived. . . . His *Word* is as eternal as Himself . . . this is what is meant by the assertion that the Son is co-eternal with the Father."

But what is that "Word" which is the necessary and

eternal self-expression of God, or "the Son" as truly reflecting the Divine Fatherhood? While there is a sense in which we may speak of "the world" or "the creation" as the "Word" and "Son" of God, the imperfect and incomplete creation cannot at any moment be in a full and true sense the Son of God. Must not the only adequate expression of God be, not, as Dr. Martineau suggests, the Creation, but that perfect Image of Himself as existing for and to Himself which Christian theology thinks of when it speaks of the eternal Son of God? How else could God find adequate *eternal* expression of Himself?

### *The Reality of the Logos*

(2) Again, taking the world as it is before us, the reality of the Logos, in the sense of the Divine Reason that animates the world and rises to its highest manifestation in man, cannot possibly be denied. Our knowledge of Nature and entire real knowledge, indeed, depends on the assumption of the rationality of Nature and its consequent intelligibility. Even a very imperfect acquaintance with Nature will make it manifest that it is instinct with Reason, that it is at every point the expression of Reason and dominated by Reason, that, in the words of the late G. J. Romanes, "Reason oozes out at every pore." Reason in man, moreover, depends on the prior presence of Reason in Nature. It is solely through his relation to Nature that Reason becomes organised in his brain. The reality of the Logos in the world, therefore, *in this sense*, cannot be denied without overthrowing the very foundations of Reason itself; there is nothing more certain than that the Logos as the Divine Reason (and creative power) is the principle of the world's life, manifested as such at every point thereof.

Now, this Divine Reason thus present and working in the world is God, or the Father, *as so present and working*;

but, as we have already seen, we cannot, without falling into Pantheism, identify it with God as *He is in Himself*, but must see in it God as He distinguishes Himself from Himself and goes out from Himself to create the world.

#### 4. THE IDEAL OF THE WORLD

The world, as a creation of God, must have its *Ideal* in the mind of God. The only way in which we can understand or interpret the world as a unity is to regard it as an organism animated by a Divine principle of life and realising a Divine Idea. What that Idea is—what is the final and formative cause of the world—we can only know, as in the case of every organism, from its highest manifestation. This we undoubtedly see in Christ, appearing as the Crown of Humanity with the consciousness of Divine Sonship. The Ideal of the world's life, therefore, was this *Sonship* in the mind of God, and it is this idea of Sonship that is the principle of the world's life, and that is realising itself therein. It is *this* that is the Ideal of the world's life, and it is, therefore, *this*, and not any of the ideas of the various other objects in the progressive creation, which is eternally *real* in God. The eternal Sonship is the Reality of Life in its relation to God, for it is God as He thinks and wills Himself in relation to Himself. The world exists for a purpose. It is not merely, as some put it, a "self-manifestation" of God in the ascending forms of its life. What rational meaning would there be in this alone? What would it lead to? There is a real meaning and serious purpose in the world's life. "Life is real, life is earnest;" it is *the realisation of something* that is the aim of God. What can it be? In the mind of God the thought of creation can be nothing else than the realisation of *Himself* in some form in the world. But it cannot be the realisation of Himself as if that were something *needed* for the Divine life as such,

save as the life of perfect Love, which can never be satisfied within itself. It cannot be the self-realisation of God as absolute; but of God as existing to and for Himself—of God as *Son*, and the whole development must be wrought out *in* God as the all-transcending, all-containing One, or “the Father.” Therefore, that which becomes the idea and principle of the world’s life is not God as “the Father,” but God as “the Son”—God as He exists to Himself, and as He goes out from Himself and becomes the principle of that life of Sonship which is realised in Jesus Christ and through Him in all.

It may be added in this connection that the Divine Thought or Idea of the world cannot be God’s thought of Himself as the absolute or Infinite Being. There can be only one absolute and Infinite Being. It must be the thought of Himself, therefore, in some finite form which yet shares and expresses that essential, infinite Love, which is the deepest life of God. Before ever there can be a world there must be its Ideal in the eternal Sonship in God. The Ideal, moreover, must be an ethical one, and where can this be found save in such a distinction of God from Himself, in response to Himself, as is implied in the doctrine of eternal Sonship. But the necessity for this ethical Ideal in God we shall see more fully immediately.

#### 5. FROM THE NATURE OF GOD

(1) *God as Self-conscious Spirit.*—Reasoning from analogy—the only ground on which we can stand if we are to reason on such subjects at all—God, as living, personal, self-conscious Being, must have an object in His consciousness in relation to which He knows Himself. As Dr. Martineau, Unitarian though he was in his thought of God, has said, “to be a ‘subject’ is to have an ‘object’ and hold an existence, not ‘absolute’ but relative, and the

moment we conceive of mind at all, or any operation of mind, we must concurrently conceive of something other than it as engaging its activity.”<sup>1</sup> But it is equally manifest that, if God is to be God, infinite and unlimited save by His ethical and rational nature, this object cannot be, as Dr. Martineau suggests, either “space” or “matter” (supposing these to be *real* existences); for these would limit God and be the negation of His infinitude, but something arising *eternally* in His own consciousness. It can only be the consciousness of Himself as existing to and for Himself; in other words, as “Son.” “Space” and “matter,” it is said, present “a field comprising an immense tissue of relations; all that can be evolved by the sciences of measure and number, or deduced among the primary qualities of body; and in thinking out the universe under these conditions, the Divine intellect moves in steps of pure deduction on an eternal ground, and justifies the saying of Plato that God is the great Geometer.”<sup>2</sup> But, before we can speak of “a field for the Divine intellect,” we must first have the Divine intellect itself; and how can we possibly have this, without conceiving the distinction in it of subject and object? Moreover, the Divine self-consciousness must be fundamentally *ethical* in its nature. No one would contend more earnestly than Dr. Martineau would have done that God must be *eternally more* than “the great Geometer” of Plato, even eternally an ethical Being, with an ethical self-consciousness; and how can He be this save by eternally distinguishing Himself from Himself and existing and acting to and for Himself, or in relation to Himself?

(2) *God as Reason, Love, and Will.*—The life of God as personal implies Intelligence, Feeling, Volition; or Reason

<sup>1</sup> *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

Love, and Will. Reason and Love are indeed in their deepest essence *one*. The perfectly reasonable is at the same time the perfectly good. Love is, therefore, as Christianity declares, the very essence or innermost nature of God, and the spring from whence all else flows. It is His Love that determines His thought and moves His Will. As the perfectly good or the perfect Love, He thinks and wills the perfectly reasonable and good, and can think and will nothing less. He must, therefore, think *Himself*—not as a mere reduplication of Himself—but as existing for and to Himself; in other words, *as Son*. What can the thought of God be, but Himself as thus existing for and to Himself, and, we might even say, in obedience to Himself? It is Himself as He eternally thinks and knows Himself—Himself as proceeding from and existing to Himself. This is the eternal and, if we may so speak, necessary expression of the Reason and Love of God.

It is often argued that the love that God is must eternally produce an object to which it can impart itself, and from which it must be eternally reflected back again. It is thus that some theologians have argued for the existence of a Divine Son of God, and for what has been termed a "Social Trinity." But this, if the Love is not to be mere self-love, would imply such a distinct and separate person in the Son as would be wholly inconsistent with the unity of the Divine Being, and as would even savour of the mythological. This is not the inference which we seek to draw from the existence of God as Love. The Scriptural doctrine is that God *is* Love, and "the Son" must be that same Love in one mode of its existence. The Love that God *is* is not merely "the affection of one person for another," as of individuals, but that Holy, universal, Infinite Love which for ever seeks to impart Itself, and which causes *all* persons to arise. The Son is that Love as it goes forth to impart Itself to others conceived in the Divine

Image. The Son in God is thus at once the Ideal and the potency of the Creation. The perfect Love that God is, just because it is perfect Love, can never keep Itself to itself, but must be eternally giving Itself and going forth creating. We cannot possibly imagine a time when that Love did not communicate Itself. Creation must be eternal, if God is eternally perfect Love. But the Creation has its Ideal in the Son, and in the very act of passing forth from Himself, in His Self-communication, there is a Self-diremption in God, and the Divine Life, thus for ever arising as Self-giving and for ever passing out from Itself in obedience to Its own nature as Love (if we may so speak) is God as Son—God as He in His Love for ever arises to Himself and for ever passes out into the creation.

(3) Again, *God as eternally active Will* must eternally will something. But as perfectly good will, He can only will *Himself* as the perfectly good Being, first, as existing to Himself in a perfect Image of Himself, which, as we have seen, is not merely Ideal, but Real in Himself, and which is the ultimate Ideal of all existence. God as willed by Himself, thus proceeding from Himself, depending on Himself, and existing for Himself, as the realisation of the perfectly good, is God as "Son"—not God absolutely, but God as eternally willed by God—"God of God," as the Creed says. We have here the abiding truth in the subordination doctrine.

(4) *God as the perfect Ethical Being*.—This is the revelation of God given in the New Testament, especially in the teaching and life of Christ, and it is the only satisfactory thought of God as the living God. God is in Himself the absolutely perfect Being, and it is out of His perfection the creation flows. The universe is not God seeking

to realise Himself for the first time, striving after something which He in no form possesses,—this would be mere Pantheism,—but *creation* out of His own Divine fulness. God must have in Himself the absolute fulness of life in its highest and eternal form; creation is not the realisation of that life for Himself, but its impartation to others, the causing others to arise and share in that which is eternally perfect in Himself. *He must be for ever greater than the highest to which He raises the creature*; the creation can never rise to aught greater than there is in its eternal Source; therefore, if the axiom *ex nihilo nihil fit* is to hold good, God must have in His own life the highest to which He can raise the highest creature; in other words, *the perfection of ethical life*. Only thus can we have the living God, and not a mere Spirit of the universe or a growing Deity.

#### *Ethical Life impossible without Distinctions*

It is impossible to conceive of such ethical life existing in God out of all relations. God, conceived as a single, undistinguished Being, could have no *moral* content—pure Being, as Hegel truly said, is = nothing. He must have within Himself that which corresponds to *relations* on the part of finite beings: He must be *Son* as well as Father; and in this relation of Fatherhood and Sonship, united in the one Spirit, there is that which gives the Ideal of all ethical life.

The Theist, while rejecting the eternal Sonship and Deity of Christ, earnestly maintains that God is He in whom all our Ideals are realised. "Every rational soul," says Professor Upton (*Hibbert Lectures*, p. 260), "is the offspring or reproduction of Him in whom all true Ideals have at once their source and realisation." But *what* is the Ideal for *us*? Certainly it is not one of supremacy such as exists in God. He is the Father, and we are the offspring. We are fathers in an earthly sense, no doubt; but for us

all, fathers and sons alike, the Ideal of our life towards God is that of *Sonship* and obedience. Has that Ideal then no real existence in Him? Do we only see the supreme *authority* in God, and not, at the same time, the supreme example of obedience to that authority, with all the ethical qualities which belong to all relationship to Himself as supreme? How else, indeed, can we see a real, that is *voluntary*, ethical life in God, and not a mere dim ground of possibility? As Dr. Dorner has remarked: "It is essential to the ethical that it be the product of *volition*; otherwise we should have merely an ethical *nature*, which is a *contradictio in adjecto*." God must be both the ethically necessary and the ethically free, which last is realised in Him as the Son, into which life of Sonship He for ever passes forth. If we leave out this Sonship from the Divine life, the ethical qualities which are most distinctive of our life would have no real existence in God; nay, the very essence of our life as that of Sonship towards Himself would be without ground or Ideal in Him. If this life of Sonship, with its free obedience to the ethical, and the actual sacrifice which such obedience calls forth from man, does not exist in God, then, not only are we left destitute of the highest example thereof, and of the supreme inspiration thereto, but we make God *less* than a man of the highest type of goodness; we make the created greater, ethically, than the Creator.

But it is just this Sonship that we see in God as the moving principle of the creation. The Son is God recognising and realising the sovereignty of that ethical life which is His essential Being; and in Jesus Christ we thus behold the Divine Sonship revealed as in its essence identical with the human sonship we are all created for. There is truly only one *substance*, and there cannot be any other—the Divine Substance; but it is *ethical* in its essence, and it goes out from itself in obedience to its own law of Love.

The Son is God expressing His own life in voluntary obedience to the Divine Love and Righteousness. It is only this Sonship as well as Fatherhood in God Himself, that can possibly show us *ethical* life in God, to see the reality of which is, perhaps, the deepest need of our generation. It is in this Divine Sonship that we have the prototype of ours. What Christ realised in Himself and manifested, and what He lives to realise in us, is that Sonship which is eternally real in God as the perfect ethical Being. It is this that gives us the highest and most elevating thought of God,—when we see Him acting in obedience to His own nature and Law of Love; but when the Son is made in any semi-human sense a *separate* person with God, the vision is obscured, and we only see this actual self-sacrificing life of perfect Love in “the Son,” not in the eternal Father, or God as God.<sup>1</sup> What a revelation it is! I am called to a life of self-sacrifice such as often seems hard to accept and endure; but when I see this to be the very life that God is eternally living, while yet He eternally preserves His Divine Being and finds its blessedness, how clear does it appear that in no other way can the highest and most blessed life be realised in any human being; and how manifest is it that the life we behold in Christ was verily the Divine life realising itself in human form. Calvary, as a poor West Indian negro woman remarked, was really “*to be expected*”; for it was what was most like God.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. R. H. Hutton, Dr. Dale, and others have given forcible expression to the need for seeing our ideal of obedient Sonship in God; but they have so spoken of “the Son,” as if He were a separate person in something like the human sense of the word, that their reasoning loses its force with many who cannot entertain the latter conception, which is, of course, also inconsistent with the real unity of God.

On ethical life in God, as involving a Trinity, see also the late Principal Caird's Gifford Lectures, First Series (now published under the title of *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*), to the delivery of which the present writer had the privilege of listening.

## 6. IN RELATION TO THE CREATION

Inasmuch as the Love that God is is infinite or perfect Love, it must completely give itself to others, while at the same time preserving itself and realising itself in them. It is the very nature of perfect Love so to give itself, and while, with God conceived otherwise than as perfect Love, or, with His satisfaction complete in a social Trinity of quasi-human persons, it is impossible to explain the creation,—from the standpoint of perfect Love the creation is inevitable, and yet ethically free. It is, as we have said, the very nature of perfect Love so to give itself, and God, as He thus goes out from Himself, is God as Son. Not a *separate* person from the Father, but God in this relation to Himself, and it was as such (as we shall see) that He was in Christ constituting His unique Sonship. The infinite Love, just because it is infinite Love, longs to diffuse itself and the blessedness that belongs to it as such Love (with this element of Sonship essentially pertaining to it), even infinitely, without end: seeking “to bring many sons to glory.” Hence the Love that God is, in which He thinks and wills Himself as Son, continually passes out through the Son in this sense into the creation, and the Son, who is ever the only adequate thought and the only possible will of God as Father, is thus the ideal and principle of the world’s life. The creation is thus necessarily conceived in the image of the eternal Son, who is to be in human form “the firstborn among many brethren”; and it is thus that through “the Son” (conceived as the Logos) “all things were made, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” It is this Sonship in Himself that God seeks to repeat in its freedom and truth in the entire creation. It was this that was incarnate in Jesus Christ; and all this is involved in the truth that man was conceived “in the Image of God.”

## 7. IN RELATION TO THE SPIRIT AND THE INCARNATION

The Love of God is that which is deepest in God, His essential life, His very being. It is the Divine feeling of Himself, if we may so speak, the Divine consciousness; and it is this Love that, in obedience to its own nature, becomes "the Son" in God, and through that which is the Son in Him gives itself to the creation. It is this, therefore, which is *the very Spirit of life* in God, both as Father and as Son, the common element in the Divine life in both its aspects, the Spirit, therefore, eternally "proceeding from the Father and the Son." *The Spirit is the inner essence and element of the life of God as Father and as Son, and the energy and influence of God in both aspects of the Divine life.* We thus see how it was that in the incarnation of the eternal Sonship in Christ, the Spirit of the Father was the essential principle of His life, the Divine within Him, and how it came through Him in the fulness of its power into the world. We see also how, in Christ, while the consciousness of Sonship was the fundamental fact in His experience, God was at the same time regarded by Him as the transcendent Father—the Father who, as we find it stated in the Fourth Gospel, is "greater than I." The Sonship which appeared in Christ was something eternal in God. It was the Divine Sonship fully incarnating and expressing Itself in human form, through that Spirit which is the Spirit of God both as Father and as Son, and, therefore, in Jesus Christ we have the manifestation of God as being in Himself Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER V

### THE INCARNATION

#### A NECESSARY RESULT, YET FREE

THE Incarnation is the self-realisation of God as Son in human form, which means, of course, God as man. Stated thus, the question, How can we conceive of a Divine Person becoming a human person? loses most of its difficulty, and we see how Jesus Christ could be truly man, and yet God as Son incarnate. It is that which was all along the Divine principle of the world's life, and the Ideal in which man was conceived, working itself out and realising itself in outward form; it is the coming into full manifestation of God as He has been all throughout working and becoming increasingly manifest in the world's life; it is the Divine Thought of the Creation fully expressing itself—"the Word made flesh"—"the eternal life that was with the Father manifested unto us"; it is God as He has completely given Himself to man. It is what *must* have come to pass, unless creation was to prove an utter failure.

#### *No Opposition between Divine and Human*

If, indeed, there were, as many have imagined, an inevitable opposition between God and man, or between the Infinite and the finite, such an expression of the life of God in human form would be impossible. But, as Dr.

Dorner remarks in his *System of Christian Doctrine*, this idea may be said to have passed away, and the infinite in man in relation to his receptiveness for the Divine is increasingly recognised.<sup>1</sup> As Hegel pointed out, were it otherwise, the finite would constitute a limitation to God which He could not transcend, and thus the very idea of God would be denied. The Infinite, extensively or quantitatively thought of, cannot, of course, be expressed in the finite; but the essential infinitude of God, as Luther so earnestly contended, is intensive and qualitative. It is ethical: God is Love in His essential being, and this intensive infinitude may certainly be expressed in human form, and was so expressed in Christ as the culmination of the Divine self-manifestation in, and self-impartation to, the world. Since man is conceived in the image of God, the human can become the manifestation of the Divine.

#### *Relation to Sin and Redemption*

If it be asked how this agrees with the dominant New Testament representation that it was *on account of sin* and to redeem men from sin, that the Son of God came into the world, we answer that this is perfectly true; yet, while the minds of the early Christians were naturally chiefly fixed on Redemption, it is also true that His entrance into the world and self-manifestation in human form was the consummation of God's purpose in the creation and of His entire working in the world. As Dr. Orr has said, "Creation is built on Redemption lines." Sin was not unforeseen and unprovided for by God; and, from eternity, it has been true that, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Redemption was not a temporal, but an eternal conception with God, and Christ was "the Lamb slain from

<sup>1</sup> See also Principal Caird's Gifford Lectures, Second Series (*Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*).

the foundation of the world." To ask whether He would have come independently of man's sin and need of Redemption is simply to substitute an imaginary ideal of our own for that Reality, which must have been always present to the mind of God, and always provided for in the Divine, Eternal Thought. It has been asked whether there was involved in the life of God that very manifestation which we behold in the life of "the man of sorrows." How can we doubt it? How could anything be manifested in the life of that Christ in whom God was revealed that did not belong to the very life of God? And how else has the infinite, pitying, self-sacrificing Love that God is been made known?

### *The Principle of the World's Life*

That the Son of God (or the Logos) is the principle of the world's life is a very old Christian thought, found, indeed, in both Paul and John. "In Him," we read in the Epistle to the Colossians (i. 16 seq.), "were all things created . . . ; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist (or hold together)." And John says (i. 3, 4), "All things were made through Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made. In Him was life." In the Revelation He is "the Alpha and the Omega; the first and the last" (i. 8, 18). If we take this thought in earnest, it will give us of necessity—yet a necessity flowing from the Divine Love in freedom—the Incarnation of the Logos or eternal Son—or, as we prefer to say, on scriptural grounds, *God as Son*—who so becomes the principle of the creation. If, indeed, we believe in the creation of the world by *God* (by whatever mode), the appearance of a Divine Being in human form is not only far from inexplicable or hard to believe, but is, on the contrary, a necessity of the world's development. The deepest source of the world's

life is not in itself, but in God ; and, if the world represents a Divine Thought, must not that Thought in due time appear as realised and expressed in the world ? But the ultimate thought of God in the creation of the world can be nothing less than *Himself*—the realisation of His own Divine life in human form, and it was this that made itself manifest in Jesus Christ.

### *The World as an Organism*

Again, the conception of the world—of the universe—to which our modern thought is led is that of a vast *organism*, animated by a common life, with all its parts harmoniously working towards one grand dénouement or goal. This conception of the universe as an organism is now generally accepted as that in the light of which alone it can be explained or understood. But if the universe is such an organism, then, clearly, it must have a Divine principle or Ideal of its life immanent in the sense in which every individual organism has such an immanent or Ideal principle. In every organism, without exception, what we behold is the evolution of this immanent principle or Idea. This is not a separate Entity; it is spiritual and invisible, although, doubtless, in some way expressing itself in the primary material of the organism; but, however expressed and operative, it is most certainly *there*: for it is just this that distinguishes each organism from every other, and gives it, in fact, all the reality that it possesses, by determining *what it shall be*. It is this immanent principle that holds in itself and determines the life of every organism, maintaining thus all the various types of life which we behold in the world, and co-ordinating the working of all the parts of each organism so that it shall serve the whole. We cannot now speak of “a vital principle” in the old sense of the term, but the more we are driven from this idea of a vital principle, the more are we thrown back on an *ideal* principle of the

organism. It is an established fact that every part of every organism has been formed for, and acts continually in subordination to, what we can only call *the idea* of the good of the whole, and of the definite kind of life belonging to each organism. That idea, containing often a great complex of qualities that can only be ideally expressed, and often such as are in themselves distinctly spiritual qualities, is in some way present influentially from the first in every organism, and so as to determine its entire development. As the great physiologist Claude Bernard has said: "That which characterises the living machine is not the nature of its physico-chemical properties, however complicated, but the creation of the machine itself, which goes on before our eyes under conditions proper to it, and according to a definite idea which expresses the nature of the living being and the very essence of life. . . . In every living germ there is a creative idea which develops and manifests itself in the organisation. . . . Here, as everywhere, this is the originating and governing principle of the whole."<sup>1</sup> But although in some real sense present from the first and dominating the development of the organism, this idea only becomes fully *manifest* in its completion. In man, we might say, that it is this ideal principle that becomes conscious of itself in his personality. There has been a spiritual or ideal element present from the very first, so that "the soul" never needed to "come in" in some inexplicable way. We might say that it is this ideal formative principle that becomes the conscious self. In *this* sense the old lines are true—

"For of the soul, the body form doth take ;  
For soul is form and doth the body make."

Now, the world, as the universal organism embracing all others, has *its* principle of life in that Divine Reason of which it is so manifestly to some extent the expression, and

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Dr. De Pressensé in *A Study of Origins*, p. 150.

the end of the working of that Reason must be its *complete* expression in some adequate form. It is just the presence and working of that Reason that makes the world a cosmos instead of a chaos, gives it its unity, and determines its progressive life. It is this Divine Reason becoming increasingly and with growing fulness *the Word* which manifests God that is, in an entirely indisputable sense, the *Logos* that was *in* the world, and which, according to Hebrew modes of thinking, was regarded as "the Spirit" in one aspect of its working: it is "God immanent in Nature and in man." The history of the world must be (like the evolution of an organism) the growing manifestation of this Divine principle of its life, which is not present as a "world-soul," but, viewed from the Divine side, is the increasing entrance of the Divine life into finite forms of manifestation, till at length it appears in the fulness of the original Divine Thought, and the Divine Reason in due time shows itself as being also that Divine Love which it has been all along, but which has been only gradually expressed.

Or, we may view it in this way. That which is the principle of the world's life manifests itself in a successive evolution of organisms, all to serve its purpose of self-manifestation, and rises ever higher and higher in its self-realisation. In each animal organism its ideal or principle wakes, as it were, to conscious life: it has been in each the formative soul. Rising ever higher and higher, by means of this continuous evolution, it attains in man to self-consciousness. But the process does not stop here. Humanity is an organism as truly as is the individual man; it also has an ideal which is the Divine meaning of its life, and which it must reach out towards—

"... all tended to mankind,  
And, man produced, all has its end thus far;  
But in completed man begins anew  
A tendency to God. Prognostics told

Man's near approach ; so in man's self arise  
August anticipations, symbols, types  
Of a dim splendour ever on before,  
In that eternal circle run by life.”<sup>1</sup>

Like every other organism, Humanity must have its *Head*, in whom it shall become conscious of itself in relation to God, conscious of itself as Son of God; in whom the mere self-consciousness shall be transcended by God-consciousness. This true Head of Humanity appears in Christ, at once the Son of man and the Son of God. In Him man rises to that consciousness of God in the form of Sonship, and of his eternal relation to God, which is the realisation of the truth of his manhood as conceived by God. It is, at the same time, the *revelation* of his manhood as well as the disclosure of the Divine meaning of the world. Under the form of a Kingly Representative of God, who should also be His Son, this grand conception had begun to make itself dimly visible to the eyes of the prophets of Israel through “the Spirit of Christ that was in them,” when they “beheld afar off” both the suffering and the glory of the Coming One; and this was the source of Messianic prediction.

On the Divine side, it was the realisation by God of His Divine and eternal thought and life of Sonship in man—His incarnation of Himself in His Son in human form. The Son in God in whom the creation is grounded and who has been the principle of its life all through, appears conscious of His Divine Sonship in human form. It is by no means a blind “tendency” or something unconscious in its origin that comes to consciousness of itself in Christ. It is the living personal life of Sonship in God that has become able to express itself in the human form it was creatively seeking to express itself in; and through this manifestation of the Son of God—culminating in that self-

<sup>1</sup> Browning’s ‘Paracelsus.’

sacrifice which is the revelation of the eternal self-giving Love from which the creation proceeds—that new Power of God enters the world which alone can lead to the consummation of the creation in all its members, not directly, indeed (which sin prevented), but through Redemption. Thus Jesus Christ truly “came into the world,” and came “to save sinners.” On account of the Sin of the world, His manifestation became that of the world’s Saviour.

It might be thought, perhaps, that the ideal of Humanity should be manifested as realised, not in an individual, but socially, in the unity of all the members thereof. But the idea of Humanity cannot appear in the race, nor be realised by it as a race, till it first appears in and is realised by *the individual*. Only through the elevation of individuals to their true life can that of the race, by any possibility, be realised. If Humanity is an organic body, it must know itself in and find its unity through Him who is its Head; and the Christian idea is, therefore, that of one body of which Christ is the Head, through union with whom as the Head our individual life is to be realised in its truth; and, just as it is so realised, the unity of Humanity as a whole will be reached. The ethical fulness of Life is first in the one man that it may be, through Him, in all.

#### *Both Natural and Necessary and Redemptive*

The Incarnation of the Son in God is thus, while truly Redemptive, the natural and necessary culmination of the creation originating in the Love of God. Unless we are to lose God in a Pantheistic identification of Him with the world, we must, as we have said, think of Him as in some way going forth from Himself so as to become the principle of the world’s life, while yet He remains perfect in His all-containing Divine transcendency. And unless the

Divine purpose in the Creation is to fall through, this Divine principle must work itself out, this Divine Thought must realise itself, this Divine Life must be manifested. This is what we have in Christ. But He appears in a world which is more or less under the dominion of sin, and His great work becomes, therefore, that of the Redeemer of the Body of which He is the Head from sin and its consequences. A sinless Humanity was God's Ideal, and that Ideal was realised in Christ. Sin does not belong to the Divine Idea of man, and, as we shall see further on, it was just towards the production of such a sinless Humanity that God had been all along working in the world. If it be still asked, why should this *one man* be found sinless in the midst of a sinful world, the answer is that it was just in Him as the Divine-Human Head that God realised His purpose, so that from Him the same sinless Humanity should realise itself in all men. This is in analogy with all God's ways of working as far as known to us.

#### THE INCARNATE SON

We have thus in Jesus Christ a Person at once Divine and human, and we escape many of the difficulties supposed to attach to the idea of the Incarnation. It is the Eternal Son in God, or God as Son, who becomes in Him incarnate; it is God as He goes out from Himself in obedience to His own Law of Love to become the principle of the world's life, who now realises His life in that human form which is the goal of the creation. But it *is* in human form that He appears, and there can be therefore nothing in His appearance inconsistent with the Divine thought of man, which is that of the Son and Image of God. A Divine Being is in our midst; but it is in the form of a man that He is here. It is God as Son who is incarnate, and, therefore, as we have seen, His consciousness toward God is

that of Sonship. He is man, and, therefore, must enter the world as a human child, and pass through all the stages of a genuinely human life, and the perfect Incarnation of God in Him can only be realised in the consummation of His manhood. He must learn as men learn, and be "made perfect" as a human son "through suffering." There can be nothing manifested in that human form which is not according to the Divine idea of Humanity on the earth and in the flesh. Otherwise He would be no longer man at all. It is idle, therefore, to look to Christ in His earthly manifestation for information on all manner of subjects, or to expect to behold in Him the complete revelation of Divine Omnipotence or Omniscience. These Divine attributes cannot be revealed in any *finite* form: it would be a contradiction in terms to suppose that they could. It is only the ethical life of God, His intensive Infinitude, His infinite Love, that can be so manifested. *That* was as completely manifested in the life and self-sacrifice of Christ as we can ever conceive it to be manifested. As the Logos incarnate, there will also be such a measure of the Divine Intelligence present as can be expressed in and through a finite organism, and such a degree of the Divine Power revealed as can be exercised through such an organism and as belongs to man in the perfection of his life, and in his divinely-intended lordship over nature. All this we see in Christ, all this, but no more; nothing that would make Him God *rather* than man, which would be as untrue as to make Him man rather than God. He was man in the full truth of His manhood, and at the same time He was the Son of God with a consciousness of essential and eternal Sonship towards the Father, and, according to the Fourth Gospel, of a pre-existence with or in God.

But it may be said that this last feature—this Divine element in His consciousness—takes Him out of the category of the human. May it not rather be, on the

contrary, the revelation of man in his truth? Certainly, He could only have that consciousness and still be man, if man was, according to his Ideal, and as respects the source of his being, originally *in God*. But this is just the truth for man as man that the Incarnation reveals, although we only see its manifestation in the one man, in whom as the *Head* Humanity comes to full consciousness of itself. The Eternal Son, or God as Son, contained in Himself potentially every man to be born into the world, and, as the Head of Humanity, He holds in Himself in human form this consciousness of the primal relation of man to God. Otherwise, the Christ of the Fourth Gospel would not be truly man; but only a Divine Being *appearing* in human form. Christ then was truly man, but He was the *Head* in organic relation to Humanity, in whom the Divine Idea realised Itself consciously in human form, and, therefore, the distinctive and essentially Divine element in Him as He appears before us is this consciousness of Sonship toward God, and of Representative Headship in relation to man—the Son of God and the Son of man. It is therefore that this complete Incarnation has been realised only in this *one* man, and it is this which, while it does not make Him less truly man, differentiates Him from other men: *but the distinction is precisely that between the members and the Head.*

### *The Two Natures*

We are thus also saved from all perplexity concerning “the two natures” in Christ.<sup>1</sup> There were not two different

<sup>1</sup> Never by any external joining of two natures can we get a real unity of God and man. But, as we have already seen, there is no opposition between the Divine and the human, and what we have in Christ is the self-realisation of the Divine in human form. While we may rightly speak of the nature of a man as being different from that of an animal (and it would be impossible for a man to express his essential nature in an animal form), we cannot speak thus of a difference between

"natures," but one essential ethical nature in one Divine-human Person, even *that nature which, in the Eternal Son, in whose image we are conceived, was the Divine Ideal of every man.* Our true "Nature" and our "Ideal" are one and the same thing, and in Christ we behold that Ideal realised in one Person, who was both wholly human and truly Divine—God and man in one undivided Person.<sup>1</sup> The only difference that can be acknowledged is that of the form of existence. God is Infinite and man (in his present state, at least) is finite. Yet he has the capacity for the Infinite in its ethical truth, which is the essential being of God. The essential "nature" is the same in man as in God. How else could Jesus in His Divine Humanity say "I and the Father are one"? The essential thing in Christ—His very substance, if we may so speak—was His Sonship to God. But He held this ever in human form, and never claimed to be anything but *the Son of God.* It was the Eternal Son in human form, and appearing in that form as the result of all the working of God in the world. It was His self-realisation in that form. When a man appeared in whom the Divine thought and life in man were perfectly realised, in that man, *ipso facto*, was the Word made flesh and the Son in God incarnated.

the Divine nature and the human. We cannot do so, for the simple reason that God is the Father and man is ideally the son, conceived in the very Image of God.

<sup>1</sup> As Professor Du Bose remarks, in another connection, "Nothing can be fully known save in the light of its end. To know what we are, we need to know what we shall be. Aristotle's definition of the *nature* of a thing is this—'What a thing is when its becoming has been completed, that we call the "nature" of a thing, as, e.g., of a man'" (*Soteriology of Salvation*, p. 7).

What we have advocated in the text is quite different from Monophysitism, which lost the human in the Divine. We maintain that in Christ we have the unity of the Divine and the human—that in Him they were *one.*

*Impersonal Humanity and Divine Personal Incarnation*

Nor need we be troubled with questions concerning the *impersonality* of the human nature. An impersonal human nature—a human nature apart from a person whose nature it is—seems quite inconceivable, save as something purely ideal. But a Divine Person can be a human person, just because human personality is conceived in the image of God. It does not follow that the human personality must embrace all that belongs to the Divine personality; and if it be asked, what then became of that in the Divine Personality which transcended the human? we must remember that, unanswerable as this question is on some theories of the Incarnation, on the theory here advocated what we behold in Christ is not a Divine Being abruptly, or *de novo*, as it were, reducing Himself to the limits of the human, but one who has been, ever since the creation of the world, working towards this very end of self-realisation or self-expression in human form. The God who becomes incarnate in Christ has already conditioned His being to some extent in Nature—in those finite forms which precede and lead up to the human, and, if He could do this, much more could He express His essential life in that human form which was conceived in the very image of Himself. All along He has been entering the world more and more completely; now He enters it in a personal Divine-human form—in that Divine manhood the realisation of which is the very end of all the Divine working and the original motive of the creation. The whole of the Divine attributes need not be expressed, or be capable of expression under the limitations of the flesh; but we all believe that a person can exist in more than one *form*. Christ lives to-day, all who believe that He lives at all will acknowledge, in a higher form than when He was on the earth; and, indeed

we all hope yet to exist in a higher form while we remain the same persons. It was really a return to "the Father" that was effected in the consummation of the Divine-human life in Christ. The limitations of the flesh having been transcended, He then entered into a form of life "in God" commensurate with the full expression of the attributes pertaining to Divine Sonship, while retaining His human experience—having "carried," as the Creed says, "the manhood into the Godhead"—having realised in Himself the Humanity aimed at in the creation—having become, without any loss to His Divinity, "the firstborn" of the human sons that God went forth into the creation in His self-giving Love to find—having become the Redeemer of His brethren and "first begotten from the dead"—the natural Head of all things thus becoming the Head of His Church.

Although present as man in the flesh, God did not cease to be "the Logos" upholding all things by the word of His power. But for this we do not need to try to imagine *a twofold consciousness* in Christ, but only to recognise how God had already *conditioned* His power in the forces that uphold the universe, which continued and still continues to work therein. On the common theories of the Incarnation it is difficult, if not impossible, to see how the Logos can be at once present in a truly human form in Christ, and yet be at the same time the Power that works in and upholds the universe. If the power of the Logos is conceived as *personally* and consciously working in the impersonal universe, the difficulty would seem to be insuperable; but, as we shall yet seek to show, this is not the case. The Reason and Power of God as the Logos have become conditioned and are working in *impersonal form* in the universe, and, therefore, the incarnation of the Logos in Christ in no way interferes with that working, nor is a consciousness of it required in that human form.

*The Representation in the Fourth Gospel*

If the Fourth Gospel should seem to represent Christ as all through possessed of the consciousness of the Logos to a degree greater than that suggested by the Synoptic Gospels, this is due to the different standpoints occupied in the two cases. In the one case, we have the Messiah viewed and represented as He appeared to men who beheld Him with Jewish eyes; in the other case, we have the same Christ represented as He appeared to one (or more) who beheld Him in the light of the Logos Doctrine. The truth that appears in both is that there was in Christ a Divine Presence in the world; in the one case, man formed and dwelt in by the Spirit of God, and in the other, man in whom the Eternal Logos or Son was incarnate. What "the Spirit" is in the one case, "the Logos" is in the other, while, according to Christ Himself in the body of the Fourth Gospel, it was "the Father" who was dwelling in Him. The Fourth Gospel, moreover, is a representation of Christ in the light of the fully consummated incarnation, a gospel and revelation of the Spirit, which brings specially into view the Divine and eternal element that was all along within the human. Only from the standpoint of the completed unity in Spirit of the Son with the Father can we understand how Christ can speak as He does in the 14th to 17th chapters of this Gospel.

*From Paul's Standpoint*

Our understanding of the Incarnation, or the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, may be further helped by following out Paul's fundamental distinction between "the flesh" and "the Spirit." "The flesh," as something fixed and determined without any possibility of higher movement

in it such as is characteristic and distinctive of "spirit"—"nature" in this sense, may we not say?—is in itself, apart from the Spirit, undivine; it is that which the creative Spirit has left behind it as it moves onward and upward seeking to find its complete expression in man wholly after the Spirit—man in whom "the Spirit of Holiness" and not "the flesh" is the principle of life. Man in the flesh can never, therefore, become the *son*, or inherit the kingdom, of God. He must become "a new creature"—man after the Spirit; and it is just this that he is enabled to become through the Incarnation in Christ. Yet "the flesh" was necessary for the development of the separate, individual life. But it had to be transcended by the Spirit before the life of God could fully appear in man, and it was towards this that the Spirit, or God, was all through history working, specially in the line of Israel's religious development. When this was realised, then, *ipso facto*, the Son of God appeared, still, in the flesh—"in the likeness of sinful flesh"—but without sin. In Him, in whom the Spirit of Holiness was thus the centre of His personality, the Son of God entered this sinful world, and God was "in Him reconciling the world to Himself."

#### *Rational Connection in the Whole*

There is thus a rational connection manifest in the whole history of the appearing of the Son of God; and His Incarnation and work on earth are seen to be in continuation and completion of the work of God in the creation and development of man, reaching its culmination through the working of the Spirit in religious development. The Divine, ethical Sonship for ever in God, in the Ideal of which man was conceived, was manifested, God's thought of man as His son was realised, and complete provision made for its realisation in all men. Our Humanity found

its Head in Christ who, as the Incarnation of God as Son in man, is at the same time its eternal root. His Humanity is the stem of that true Vine which has its root in the Divine nature itself, and through Him, therefore, we can find all that is necessary for our life as the children of God. He, our true Head and Representative, at the same time the Incarnation of God in human form, "died for our sins" and conquered the flesh in the power of the Spirit. In that "Eternal Spirit" which is in its very nature that of self-sacrifice, He gave Himself for us to redeem us from sin, and by a repetition of the self-sacrifice in which the creation is grounded, gave Himself to us to become the immanent principle of a higher spiritual life—the new creation—in all men, even the full, blessed, and glorious life of sons of God. It was man, and yet at the same time it was God—*the one God and Father*—"the Father in Me"—who was moving in Him toward it all, and one with His Divine-human Son in it all. The divinity and the humanity are in Christ *inseparable* (although through an *ethical* unity), and it is this that makes it often hard to conceive, on the one hand, how He could be God, and on the other hand, how He could be man. But if we see in Him "both God and man in one Person"—one Divine-human Person—through the self-realisation of God as Son in human form, as the natural and necessary working out of His Eternal Divine Ideal and creative purpose of Love, becoming at the same time the principle and power of Redemption, the difficulty is removed, justice is done to both elements in the Person of Christ, and the Incarnation is seen to be, not something interposed, but the culmination of the whole Divine working in the world.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MODE OF THE INCARNATION

#### THE INCARNATION AS A PROCESS; YET AN ACTUAL NEW ENTRANCE OF GOD INTO THE WORLD

THE importance of that view of the Incarnation which regards it as flowing naturally, as it were, and yet freely, from that Eternal Sonship in God which is the Ideal and principle of the world's life—the self-realisation of the Divine life in Humanity—through a *process* which is identical with that of the creation and development of the world, and which implies the continuous entrance of God into the world, culminating in His personal entrance in Christ, will be further seen if we consider the theories by which it is sought to account for the appearance in Christ of one who is both truly God and truly man. That He was truly man—born, growing, suffering, dying—is admitted on all hands; how then could He be at the same time and in the same person, truly *God*? How do we get God here, on this earth, in this human form, moving as an actual man amongst men? This is indeed the greatest Christological problem, and one which some have given up in sheer despair,—How to get here, in the world, as a genuine member of our Humanity, one who is really, and not only seemingly, man, and who is at the same time God Himself incarnate, very man and very God.

*The Traditional Theory*

The "traditional theory of the Christian Church," as stated by Dr. Dale in his *Christian Doctrine*, "is that He added the consciousness and experience of a really human life, with all its limitations, to His eternal consciousness of blessedness and glory. The same Personality was the centre of two natures—the Divine and the human; exerted two parallel activities—did not cease to act as God, but began also to act as man; was conscious of two parallel experiences—of Divine blessedness and of human sorrow, weariness, and pain. He was God and remained God, but He became man" (p. 310).

This theory, however, seems to many orthodox theologians quite unrealisable and not in harmony with the actual presentation of Christ in the Gospels. As Dr. Denny has said: "The formula of two natures in one person does not adequately reproduce the impression that He makes. He is all one—that is the very strongest conviction we have. . . . All that is Divine in Him is human, all that is human is Divine. He is not separately, or even distinctly, Son of God and Son of man, but the Son of man who is the Son of God."<sup>1</sup>

Canon Gore says that while He "possessed at every moment the Divine as well as the human consciousness and nature," He refrained from the exercise of what He possessed.<sup>2</sup> But if He possessed this Divine consciousness, how can we speak about His "refraining from its exercise," and how, with such a twofold consciousness, could He be real and not merely *seeming* man?

Dr. Orr compares the relation of the incarnate Son to His Divine nature to the immanent presence of God in

<sup>1</sup> *Studies in Theology*, pp. 68, 69.

<sup>2</sup> *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 265, 266.

Nature, and His transcendent presence beyond Nature: "So the Divine Son took upon Him our nature with its human limits, but above and beyond that, if we may so express it, was the vast over-soul of His Divine consciousness."<sup>1</sup> But, although Dr. Orr refers to what psychology shows us of "different strata of consciousness," this would still give us that *double* consciousness which is so hard to conceive and so difficult to reconcile with the presentation of Christ in the Gospels, and, what is still more important, so impossible to harmonise with any conception of His *real* humanity. Besides, according to the Scriptures, it was not the Logos that was the over-soul in relation to Christ, but the Father.

Mr. Powell, in his recent work, entitled *The Principle of the Incarnation*, seeks to escape from the difficulty involved in the old Church doctrine concerning the Person of Christ by maintaining that the Divine and the human knowledge and modes of knowing, or omniscience and ordinary human consciousness, are so entirely different that the same Person may possess both, and yet the one never interfere with the other. But this seems clearly to imply two distinct centres of consciousness, two egos, two persons, in short. If, as Mr. Powell affirms, Christ, as Omniscient, communicates certain knowledge to, and withholds certain other items of knowledge from, His human consciousness, we certainly seem to have *two* distinct consciousnesses, and the human Christ becomes unreal.

### *The Kenotic Theory*

Others, feeling the insufficiency of the common Church-theory in view of a real developing humanity in Christ, have advocated various forms of what is termed "the *Kenotic theory*," based on Phil. ii. 7, where it is said of Christ that He "emptied Himself" (*ἐαντὸν ἐκένωσε*), and,

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian View of God and the World*, p. 281.

according to which theory, the Son of God so renounced that which belonged to the Divine as to become an unconscious babe in the virgin's womb. We cannot, of course, get a truly Divine Being in finite manifestation without a *Kenosis* in some form, but the idea of a self-emptying of the Son of God in a single moment of time so as to become a human child, is quite unthinkable, and would not give us either true God or true man. This theory, although extremely popular a few years ago, and still set forth in its extreme form by Godet, and, in more moderate ways, by Principal Fairbairn, Canon Gore, and others, has been most severely criticised by Dr. Dorner in particular, and is rejected by modern theological writers like Dale and Orr and Caird.<sup>1</sup> As Dr. Dale asks, very pertinently, "What became of those Divine powers and qualities which the Eternal Son of God renounced, laid aside, when He became incarnate? Did they cease to be during the three-and-thirty years of His earthly life? Did they once more begin to be when that earthly life was ended? Or, if they continued to be, during the interval, how is it conceivable that powers and qualities could exist apart from the Person to whom they belonged?"<sup>2</sup> Besides, it does not give us the Divine in Christ as we actually see it manifested in the gospel history. We must see God as well as man in Him. "These theories seem," says Dr. Orr,—"to come to the heart of the matter at once—to involve an impossibility, inasmuch as they ask us to believe in the temporary suspension of the consciousness and the cessation from all Divine functions of one of the Persons of the Godhead."<sup>3</sup> His own doctrine is, however, as we have seen, involved in the difficulty of two consciousnesses.

<sup>1</sup> See also Bruce's *The Humiliation of Christ*. Dr. Godet is now, alas! no more with us.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Doctrine*, p. 311.

<sup>3</sup> *The Christian View of God and the World*, p. 281.

This double consciousness is indeed one of the chief difficulties besetting all theories of the Incarnation. If the Logos is left with the consciousness of *God*, how can He be, at the same time, truly *man*—a real member of this our Humanity? And if, in order to meet this difficulty, we go the length of saying that He passes out of consciousness entirely at the moment of the Incarnation, how (besides the other objections) is He thus truly *God*?

Nor is Dr. Dorner more successful in avoiding this difficulty of the two consciousnesses in his elaborate attempt, in his *System of Christian Doctrine*, to work out a more satisfactory theory of the Incarnation than that of the *Kenosis*. His theory is that of a gradual self-impartation of the Logos to the man Jesus, beginning with his miraculous conception and issuing in His complete union with him. But the Logos seems thus to be one person and the man another. Christ is left only a man in perfect union with the Logos: the Logos seems to be a different Being from the man with whom He becomes thus united. Besides, according to the Scripture representations, it is not with the Logos that Jesus stands in spiritual relation, but with the *Father*.<sup>1</sup>

To say that "in Jesus the Divine provided the Spirit," that "the Spirit that constituted His personality was Divine,"

<sup>1</sup> Principal Caird in his Gifford Lectures represents the Incarnation as the complete unity of the Divine and the human through the perfect response in Christ of the human to the Divine. But He in whom this perfect response was given is not accounted for. It is maintained that "the union of the human with the Divine in the person and life of Christ" includes "an element which differentiates it from the spiritual life and experience of all other men—there is the manifestation of a principle which was not a birth of time, but which had its source and origin in the eternal being and life of God" (*The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, ii. 169). What is necessary for a complete doctrine of the Incarnation is to show *how* this unique and *Divine* element came to be thus in Christ.

while "the fact that the Spirit was living within human limitations, spiritual as well as physical, rendered the personality human" (Dr. W. N. Clarke, *Outlines of Christian Theology*, p. 300), seems to impair the true and full humanity of Christ, by denying Him a *human* spirit.

We thus see that none of these theories is able to give us what we need in order to account for the Christ of the New Testament—a Personality truly human in its manifestation on the earth, yet essentially Divine—"a Personality which," to quote Dr. Orr, "entered into the limitations and conditions of humanity from above; which was not originally human, as ours is, but became so. Here," he says, "questions deep and difficult crowd thick upon us, to many of which no answer may be possible." Dr. Dale says "the mystery is inscrutable," and Dr. Denny declares that we get no help to its complete understanding from any theory of it. The divinely-filled man which some would substitute as an alternative to the incarnate personal Son may seem a simple conception; but it comes short of the requirements of both Scripture statements and practical faith.

*Solved by the Incarnation as a Process of Divine Self-realisation in Human form*

The view which we have been led to take of the Incarnation, as the result of a Divine *process* of self-realisation in the world, is free from these difficulties, and gives us in Christ one who is at once truly Divine and truly human—God and man in one Person; and we venture to think that it is only by a process of gradual *self-realisation* that we can ever see God truly becoming man in this world—belonging to our Humanity, and yet coming from above it. It is God as Son, as He has gone out from Himself to become the principle and Ideal of the world's life, realising His life "in

the fulness of the time," in that human form which He was seeking, and as the result of all the working of God as Word and Spirit in Nature and in man. It is involved in the very idea of the Logos or Son as distinguished from the Father and in the thought of God's immanence in the world, if there is any real meaning in that thought at all. It implies, not a temporal, but an *Eternal Kenosis* in God, and His self-realisation in the world, not as the result of physical processes merely, but of an ethical movement "through the Spirit." And it is not merely a vague "universal" Incarnation of God in man that we thus reach, but the special, unique Incarnation of God as Son in Christ. It is only by this conception of the Incarnation as *a process of self-realisation* in humanity by God as Son that those difficulties, felt to be so formidable, can be met, and Christ be seen to be at once God and man.

#### *The Doctrine of the Spirit leads to this Conception*

It is to this view that we are led by that which we have seen to be the distinctive mark of Christianity as a new Dispensation of the Spirit, in which the Spirit of God comes in fuller measure and in a new and higher form to men in and through Jesus Christ.

The two outstanding features of that greater fulness of the Divine which enters the world through Christ are (first) its distinctively *ethical* character and fulness of manifestation, and (secondly) the manifestation in Christ of the *personal* presence of God in the world, and the *personal* element which now belongs to the presence and working of the Spirit in man.

1. If we think of the first of these features we shall see that the Incarnation of God in Christ could not be something primarily physical, but ethical, the result of an ethical process of development. God is not in His essence

physical, but ethical Being: "God is Spirit"; "God is Love." The Incarnation of this *ethical* God in man could not possibly be the result of some physical act in a moment of time, whatever place the physical act may be supposed to hold in relation to the working out of the process. A moral and spiritual Being or Person cannot be straightway *produced* or *created*. Nothing more hinders the perception of the Incarnation as something real than the external way in which it is often presented. It is forgotten that God is *Spirit* and not a Being with some quasi-physical "substance" or "*ousia*," such as was taken over from the old Philosophy, apart from which He cannot be incarnated. God's essence or *ousia* is His ethical Being, and it is impossible for an ethical Being to be straightway born into the world. He can only appear in Humanity as the result of a process of moral and spiritual development therein. The altogether abrupt entrance of the ethical Son of God into Humanity in a single moment of time is quite inconceivable, and is out of harmony with all God's modes of working as known by us. The Humanity must be *ethically* prepared to receive and express that Divine life, not by something wrought in one single person merely, but in *Humanity* as represented in some special line along which the Divine life was being developed in man. Canon Gore says: "The Eternal Son really so assumed our manhood in its completeness in the womb of the blessed Virgin as to be its centre of personality and to use all its faculties as His own in every stage of their development."<sup>1</sup> But what or where was this separate thing "*manhood*" that could be thus taken up in a moment of time? Manhood is a purely ideal conception. It could not be to the *organism* that a Divine Being so imparted Himself. There is no such *real* thing as an impersonal manhood or human nature. If the Son of God, or God as Son, is to assume our manhood and

<sup>1</sup> *Bampton Lecture*, p. 162.

to express therein the life of man in the ethical image of God, or the life of God in human form, it cannot be done in the outward and, indeed, physical manner supposed by most theories of the Incarnation. It must be *through the Spirit* in an ethical sense. The Son in God must work Himself into our nature or manhood as the result of an eternal *process* of which His appearance in the flesh is the glorious culmination. The Love that God is cannot come down in some outward way and appear as man. A real Incarnation of God must be a *becoming* in man, and all real becoming is through a gradual process. Otherwise, we have only an *appearance* of God in human form, only an external and superficial entrance of God into the world, not a real Incarnation of God as man; and Christ is not really thus seen to be both God *and* man. It must be the work of the Holy Spirit, not merely in the creative but in the ethical sense, and it is only when that Holy Spirit has made such advance in its working on men as to be able to express its very innermost life in a human person, that the Son of God can appear. Then, in that very fact, He *does* appear as the next and necessary step in the Divine process. He is man, but *that* man is also the Divine Son as man, God as Son realising His Divine life in human form. We can say, both, that *that* man is the Eternal Son of God in human expression, and that the Eternal Son of God (God as Son) is *that* man.

2. If we take next the other most distinctive element of the Dispensation of the Spirit—the *personal* manifestation of God in Christ and the *personal* Divine element now present and working in us through Christ, we shall be led to the same conception of the mode of the Incarnation. If God was manifested in Christ as personally present in the world, and if the Divine working in the Spirit has now as a distinctive feature a personal element in it, this surely implies that the working of the Spirit in man was only in

impersonal form before the Incarnation; and the whole phenomena of pre-Christian religion, both inside and outside of the Scriptures, point to this conclusion. There is no other way of explaining that which we actually find before us in the Old Testament, not merely as modern criticism now teaches us to regard it, but as it appears when the moral judgment of the Christian conscience is applied to it, or the ethical difference between the Old Testament and the New. Until Christ appears in Divine-human form as the personal organ of the Divine Spirit, it is only in impersonal form that God is *in* the world. This does not mean that the personal God is *absent* from the world, but that it is only impersonally He has as yet entered into its life. It is only by a gradual process—as forms are prepared to receive Him—that He can find increasing entrance into and expression in the world, and it is just *this* that He reaches in its fulness in the Incarnation. It cannot be otherwise if there is to be a *creation* at all. God must go out from Himself; He must in one aspect of His Being “empty Himself” and begin at the lowest in order that He may through realisation of His life *in* the world reach the highest, returning to Himself again with the riches of His Creation. This is the meaning of the Christian doctrine that “the Son” is the instrument of the creation; but He is this, not as an artificer working from without, but as the immanent principle of its life as conceived in the mind and in the image of God.

Christ is thus, on one side of His being, God as He has in His “person” of Son and *through the Spirit* gradually entered into and realised His Divine life of Sonship in the world. *We thus get a Christ who is at once truly God and truly man.* We can also now understand better His relation to the Holy Spirit in its transcendency, and can see how, not only higher impersonal influences, but such *personal* Divine influences come to operate on men as are implied in

the New Testament teaching concerning the indwelling and the grace of Christ. Up till the Incarnation God as Son was immanent in the world as its Idea, but not as yet personally present in its life. But in Christ He thus really entered into a new transcendent relation to the world, and can be in Him the universal "quickening Spirit" and personal Saviour of men brought into contact with Him through faith.

### *Implied in the New Testament Teaching*

John distinctly teaches that, *before His Incarnation*, the Logos or Son of God was "*in the world*"—He through whom all things were created (or became), and in whom was the life which was the light of men, the light which was shining in the darkness and which the darkness "*apprehended not*." "*He was in the world*, and the world was made (or became) through Him, and the world knew Him not." If He was thus in any form "*in the world*," *why should we need to go out of the world to bring Him in again from without?* When He says, "*I proceeded forth and came from God*," what He states is absolutely true; but why should it be thought necessary to suppose that it was at some given moment of *time* He came forth from the Father, and not, rather, as indeed the Prologue of the Gospel plainly says, as the *eternal Word* that had been all along working in the world, and the Power through which all things came to be? When He "*became flesh*" it was an *advance* in His manifestation, not the result of a *temporal self-emptying*, but of a *temporal self-realisation*. He prays the Father to glorify Him with "*the glory He had with Him before the world was*." Why should He go back to that eternity if it was at a definite moment in *time* that He came forth from the Father? When He speaks of "*coming down from Heaven*," etc., no one surely would seriously think of interpreting such language in a physical sense like His

materialistic Jewish opponents, though in the true spiritual sense He *did* come from Heaven. The Divine, indeed—the Son of God—cannot come into the world as if from without, for He is already *in* the world as the principle of its life; He can only come into the *full expression* of what He essentially is; and in *man*, who contains within him the capacity for the Infinite, in its ethical aspects at least, He can realise His full essential life as Son, and return to the Father in that ethical, human Sonship which He came forth from the Father to impart, but which could only be realised in man through a process of ethical development.

### *Implied in the Son as Ideal Principle of the World*

If we are right in thinking of the Eternal Son or Logos as the Ideal principle of the world's life, then He must have been, in some real sense, immanent in the world—immanent in the same sense as the idea of an organism is present in some real and effective way *from the first*, and manifesting Himself as such in growing degree with the unfolding of the world's life—as the idea of an organism gradually manifests itself—till He finally appears *as that which He is* in its consummation. If it be acknowledged that there is no opposition between the Divine and the human, why speak merely of a *union* of the two and not rather endeavour to see in Christ the *full expression* of the Divine *in* the human, or its creative self-realisation therein? Not, indeed, in the Pantheistic sense of *physical* identity or unity, but as the *ethical* self-realisation of God in man; which was only attained in its fulness in Jesus Christ, in whom the Eternal Son in God appeared realising His Divine life in human form. It is by no means as if the appearance of the Son of God in the flesh was the result of what is sometimes called “a purely naturalistic process,” or *the product* of “evolution”; but of the entire

working of God in the world and in man. There is no "nature" apart from Him who is expressing Himself therein, and "evolution" can do nothing whatever of itself; it is merely the mode by which God, as the principle of the creation, realises His life therein; it is "the evolution of the idea"—the evolving of that which was *involved* in the Divine thought of the creation. As Dr. Dorner says with reference to the self-realisation of the Logos in the *earthly life* of Christ, "all development presupposes the *totality* as a potency which bears the power of the whole"; but, if so, why not carry this back to the very beginning, and see it in the explanation of the entire development of the world culminating in Christ? The idea of the world cannot be less than God's realisation of His own life therein. It is by no means a coming of God or of the Son of God to consciousness in the life of the world, as if He had been originally a mere unconscious principle. On the contrary, we earnestly maintain the New Testament doctrine that the world is the creation of the one living, all-perfect God and Father, through that in Him which is His living Word or Son as its Ideal, and our whole anxiety is to show how we can see God as Son appearing on the earth as a true man. But the creation of the world through "the Son" means, as already said, the going out, in some way, of God from Himself in His perfect life as God, into the creation so as to become the principle of its life. We must think of it as that great eternal and continuous act of love—of loving sacrifice—in which the world is founded—a real going forth of God as Son into the forms of the world's life—a becoming immanent of God in the world for the sake of creation, to realise His life in finite (human) form in the consummation. It is, may we not say, that Eternal *Kenosis* of God which Paul sets forth in Philippians under the form of the self-emptying of the Son of God in order

to reach something higher as the result, and it is only thus that we can think of God as reaching something *higher*. It was not merely at some point of *time* that the Son "emptied Himself" and assumed "the form of a servant"; He does so eternally in becoming the instrument of the Father in the creation of the world, as the principle of the world's life. And when He is "found in fashion as a man" He is still true to Himself, and still "humbles Himself," "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." It is not a separate, subordinate Son, but *God as Son* who does all this. It is in eternity, not in time, that God acts, and the Cross of Calvary was but the manifestation in time of the self-giving love which is eternal and eternally operative in God; which, through the Son, goes forth and becomes the principle of the creation, and ultimately realises itself therein. Surely to view it thus adds immeasurably to our sense of the reality of the Incarnation, and gives additional power and pathos to the Cross. It makes us see and feel how truly these were manifestations of the eternal life of God, and it greatly enhances their influence. It is not a stooping once in time merely, but an eternal giving of Himself and a continuous and increasing entrance into the actual life of the world; and, we would repeat, it is only in this way that we can *realise* how truly the Eternal Son of God could appear and live and act in this world as a genuine man. It could only be through a process of self-realisation. If God as Son is God as He in His infinite Love goes out from the Divine form of life to become the principle of creation, this necessarily involves the ultimate realisation of Himself in human form—with no double consciousness—standing in filial relation to that Father who is God in His self-preserving transcendency; and, when He completely realises Himself through the sacrifice of the Cross, returning into the fulness of the Divine life in the Father.

*No double Consciousness*

As the double consciousness is a widely felt difficulty, we shall try to make clear our position respecting it. Our doctrine is that God as Son was incarnate in Jesus Christ, but that the Divine consciousness could only be there in human form. It was no double consciousness that Christ possessed, but the single consciousness of Sonship toward God. The Christ who appears before us holds ever this attitude toward God as Father. But such consciousness of Sonship was at once Divine and human, and in it we have the point where the Divine and the human meet and are in unity. It was a *single consciousness of Sonship*, at once Divine and human; something experienced in time, indeed, but also belonging to, and coming from, Eternity; something belonging essentially to God, who is in Himself both Father and Son. Such complete ethical Sonship as dwelt in Christ—is just as truly Divine as it is human, and He in whom it dwells is at once the Divine Son of God and the human Son of man.

That what has been set forth is in harmony with what science teaches concerning the creation as a *process*, and with what theology accepts concerning the immanence of God we shall yet endeavour to show. Meanwhile, let us conclude this chapter by showing how we thus *conserve the truth in other theories, while escaping their difficulties*, and how this theory brings out the real Headship of Christ and is in keeping with the idea of God as the perfect Being.

*Relation to other Theories*

In this process of Divine self-realisation there is truly "an adding of the consciousness and experience of a really human life, with all its limitations, to the eternal conscious-

ness of blessedness and glory";<sup>1</sup> but it is as the Divine consciousness has realised itself *in human form*, with only the consciousness proper to that form, and, as we have seen, it implies no double consciousness whatever.

So there is also truly a Divine *Kenosis*; but it is not that in a given moment of time on the part of one existing *like a human person* with God; it is the eternal passing out of God as Son from the form of the Divine life in itself to be the principle of the creation and His continuous self-impartation thereto, till at length He enters the world in the Divine-human personality of Christ, and as the result of an ethical process through which Humanity has been made susceptible of receiving and expressing the Divine in this full personal form. It is as the result of the *entire working* of the Spirit or Logos, or God as He goes out from Himself, both in Nature and in Grace, both creatively and ethically, that God at length appears in human form—with, not a merely human (in the sense of what has been before), nor a purely Divine, but a *Divine-human*, consciousness.

It may be added that this theory meets the tests sometimes applied to theories of the Incarnation from “the four great determinations of the Church.” It is *God* who is incarnate; in a true Humanity; not from beneath, but from above; and the Divine and the human are both there in the unity of one Divine-human Person.

#### *Shows the Real Headship of Christ*

It is specially worthy of notice how truly and naturally Christ thus appears as the Son of man as well as the Son of God and as the true Head and Representative of Humanity. We see very clearly and impressively His unity with the world, and His real—we might say “natural” or organic—Headship; how *inseparable* He is

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dale's statement of the traditional view, as above.

from Humanity; how certainly *it* is the Body of which He is the Head. We can understand now how truly the whole race was contained in Him, and how, without any fiction, He can be the representative man, bowing in acknowledgment of human sin and rising in token of man's Redemption. We see how natural it was that He who, as the self-giving Love of God, was the principle of the world's "natural" life should give Himself again in His sacrifice of the Cross to be the principle and power, at once immanent and transcendent, of that new spiritual and eternal life, emancipated from the flesh or lower natural principle, which He can realise in all who come to hold, not only that "natural" relation to Himself which all men hold, but that higher spiritual relation to Him as their Redeemer from the sin that hindered the "natural" realisation of His own Divine life in every man.

#### *In keeping with the True Nature of God*

Finally, we have here a conception of the Incarnation truly in harmony with the nature of God as the Perfect Being. Perfect Being is Perfect Love, and just because it is perfect it can never keep itself to itself, but must be for ever giving or imparting itself to the creation, and God cannot give less than Himself. God was *never* absent from the world so that He needed at some moment of time to come into it. He was always there and progressively entering it more and more fully as forms were present for His reception. But God is above all Ethical Being—Holy Love—and it was the Divine, ethical self-giving or self-impartation that reached its culmination and highest manifestation in Christ. But it was not meant to rest in Christ alone, but, through the Spirit that proceeds from Him, to impart itself to us all. The Divine purpose is only fulfilled when God becomes "all in all."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE INCARNATION FROM THE STANDPOINT OF SCIENCE

#### I. THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

THAT it is to the creation and not to any moment in time merely we must go back, if we would really see how God as Son can become incarnate in human form, and that it is only through a *process* of self-realisation, which must also become an ethical process, that such an Incarnation is possible, is the gist of what we have been endeavouring to say. It is only thus that we can escape from that double consciousness which vitiates all other theories of the Incarnation, except, indeed, that of a complete *Kenosis* in time, which is inadequate and unthinkable. In no other way can we find the Christ who actually stands before us in the Gospels with His genuinely human consciousness, while He has also the consciousness of having come from God and of being the essential Son of God and bearer of the Spirit in its fulness.

We shall now seek to show that our fundamental proposition is implied in what science leads us to affirm, and theologians generally accept, concerning the *immanence of God* in the world as distinguished from His *transcendency*; and that it is only on the lines we suggest that we can ever find such a theory of the Incarnation as shall be in harmony with the teachings of modern science concerning the universe and the mode of its evolution. While the scientific opposition to the Theistic conception of the world,

so strong twenty-five years ago, has almost spent itself, so far as active opposition is concerned, it has left behind it a large amount of practical agnosticism and religious indifference, and, as regards specific Christian doctrines, there is still a widespread and, perhaps, a growing belief that scientific conceptions cannot be harmonised with such a real Incarnation of God in the world as Christianity affirms, that all that we can get is "God in man" with greater or less fulness, not God as man, or one who is at once truly God and man. The position we take up, however, is that the scientific conception of the world implies such a Divine Presence and Power operative in the world as leads, of necessity, to the Incarnation, and thus, instead of labouring to harmonise religion with science, we see science itself directly leading up to and establishing religion in its highest Christian form.

### *The Immanence of God*

Science, as already remarked, has given fresh prominence to that idea of the Divine immanence which, on other grounds, was held so strongly by some of the most eminent Fathers of the early Church.

It leads us to regard the universe as a great *organism* instinct with life. As Mr. J. A. Symonds expressed it in his review of "The Progress of Thought in our Time" (*Fortnightly Review*, June 1887): "The whole scheme of things is now regarded as a single organism advancing methodically, through stages of its growth in obedience to inevitable laws of self-expansion." As Mr. Fiske also says: "The universe is not a machine, but an organism, with an indwelling principle of life. It was not made, but has grown. . . . We see all things working together, through countless ages of toil and trouble, toward one glorious consummation" (*The Idea of God*, pp. 131, 159). "This,"

to quote again from Mr. Symonds, "does not yield the world to chance or remove the necessity of thought, intention, spirit, to all manifestations of material existence. But it compels us to regard this form-giving spiritual potency as inherent in the organism: as the law of its life, not as the legislation of some power extraneous to it." "Evolution, admitting of no break of continuity in the universe, silently forces us to this conclusion; and it is only the attitude still maintained, in form at least, by Christianity toward Nature, which prevents our recognising the Spirit immanent and everywhere." In like manner, Mr. Fiske (who is an ardent disciple of Herbert Spencer, but in more ways than one going, logically, beyond his master) says, that the Law of Evolution, now found to be applicable to all manner of phenomena, "means that the universe as a whole is thrilling in every fibre with Life,—not indeed life in the usual restricted sense, but life in a general sense. The distinction once deemed absolute between the living and the not-living is converted into a relative distinction, and Life as manifested in the organism is seen to be only a specific form of the Universal Life."<sup>1</sup>

These statements are being constantly repeated by students of science, and the idea of the Divine immanence is now, in some form, accepted by theologians generally. Immanence, of some sort indeed, makes itself so manifest, that the sense of it, in a crude way, inspires the earliest forms of religion, and the prevailing form of religious philosophical thought has been Pantheistic. The scientific conception easily lends itself to a kind of Pantheism, and the idea of immanence needs important qualifications. Unless we are to fall into a Pantheistic mode of thought, and have in God merely the Spirit of the universe, we must at the same time maintain the Divine transcendency, which most modern theologians are careful to do. The conception

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of God*, p. 149.

of a Divine immanence has also been often so held and used as to do away with the reality of that special and unique Incarnation of God in Christ which Christianity affirms, and to give us only a growing, universal incarnation, of which Christ is merely the highest example as yet reached, and not really God Himself manifest in the flesh. But in spite of these dangers, and although there is considerable obscurity surrounding the idea, the fact of the Divine immanence is generally accepted. We shall endeavour immediately to ascertain what the true conception of the Divine immanence implies; but at present, and taking the idea generally, what we here maintain is that, while it is the want of making the distinction in God, necessary to preserve the Divine transcendency, that lands us in a Pantheistic conception of God, and in a denial of His special and unique Incarnation in Christ, in whom God as He became immanent in the world realised His Divine life in human form; it is, on the other hand, the want of thoroughgoing fidelity to that idea of the Divine immanence, accepted by modern theological writers, that creates the greatest of those difficulties concerning the Incarnation that are so keenly felt to-day.

It will be sufficient for illustration to refer to Dr. Orr. In his extremely able and most helpful book, *The Christian View of God and the World*, he says: "Not without reason does Scripture connect the Son with the creation, and give His person and work a cosmical significance. We may conceive of God in two relations to the world,—either in His absolute transcendence over it, which is the deistic conception, or as immanently identified with it, which is the Pantheistic conception. Or we may conceive of Him as at the same time exalted above the world,—transcending it, and yet present in it, as its immanent sustaining ground, which is the Christian conception."<sup>1</sup> And he goes on to show that "the thought of the Son as the link between God

<sup>1</sup> *Christian View of God and the World*, p. 318.

and the creation, which is so prominent a thought in the New Testament,"—He being, in the words of Dr. Lightfoot, "the final Cause as well as the creative Agent in the universe,"—leads to the conception of the Incarnation as something originally belonging to the Divine plan of the world. Elsewhere he speaks of "the proof of the presence of *thought* in the world—whatever shape that may take," and of the system which science studies as being capable of reduction to "terms of thought."<sup>1</sup> He acknowledges "a natural kinship between God and man," of which fact Christ is the proof—Christ, who is "the best of humanity" and "the revelation of humanity to itself."<sup>2</sup> And, not to quote more passages, speaking of the supposed necessity for the acknowledgment of "breaks" in the chain of development, Dr. Orr remarks: "With the view I hold of development as a process, determined from within, I do not feel the same need of emphasising these as breaks. . . . The action of the creative cause is spread along the whole line of the advance, revealing itself in higher and higher potencies as the development proceeds. It only breaks out more manifestly at the points named, where it finds a new order or kingdom of existence."<sup>3</sup>

These passages are quoted from Dr. Orr, not because the views they express are peculiar to him, but because they are representative of the best in modern theology. In their light we cannot help asking, Why, if God is thus immanent in the world in "the Son"; if the Son is at once "the beginning and the end" of the creation, "the Agent and the final Cause"; if the world is "the expression of *thought*," that is, of an Idea; and if creation or development proceeds as "a process determined from within," without the need of emphasising "breaks" therein,—why should it be deemed necessary to go out-

<sup>1</sup> *Christian View of God and the World*, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 142, 143.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 151.

side the world to bring into it, at some moment of time, the Son of God to be incarnate—He who has already been acknowledged as the immanent cause of the whole development? Is it not manifestly inconsistent with the positions laid down to do so, and is it not the supposed necessity for so doing that creates the chief difficulties with respect to the Incarnation? If it is really *God* that is immanent in the creation as its idea and cause, must not *God* necessarily come out in the consummation, as He has sought to realise His being in the world? Fidelity to the Divine immanence in the world leads of necessity to the Incarnation of the Son of God as the culmination of the whole process of the world's development.

### *The Mode of Divine Immanence*

The question of *how* God is immanent in the world is subordinate to this main conclusion, which seems irresistibly self-evident; but it is of great importance from other points of view. For we have to ask, not only how the Son of God can become Incarnate, but how He can appear with a genuine *human* consciousness, as He undoubtedly does? and also how the conception of Divine immanence agrees with the appearance of the world as it is actually before us?

1. If the person who appears in the flesh has been personally or consciously operating in the world all along,—as a separate person, that is,—how can He possess a truly *human* consciousness, such as is implied in His Divine-human consciousness; for justice must be done to both terms? He would have the consciousness, not merely of having pre-existed in God, but of having been the Creator of the world, or the Divine Agent therein. In no real sense could such a Being be described as *man*, nor do we see a vestige of any such consciousness in the Lord Jesus.

On the contrary, as pointed out in another connection, it is *the Father* whom He always regards and speaks of as the Creator of the world. These facts forbid us to suppose that, prior to the Incarnation, the Son of God, or God as Son, is *personally immanent* in the world. We have already seen how the doctrine of the Spirit leads us to the same conclusion.

2. The actual appearance of the world and the facts of its history equally forbid the supposition that a personal Being is in any direct way operating therein. Although there is a moral purpose in the Divine Thought from the first, and although everything in the universe is instinct with Reason, and is the manifestation thereof in its own place and for the purpose of its existence, we do not see any expression in Nature of those qualities which we inevitably associate with the presence and working of a personal God. There is a bright and beautiful side to Nature which we naturally love to dwell on; but there is, no less certainly, a dark and terrible side to it. We cannot conceive of a personal Creator directly and consciously calling into being all the hideous and savage forms of brute and insect life, and studiously equipping them with their deadly weapons of prey and of cruelty, or even creating and directly upholding in their barbarous and miserable existence such specimens of humanity as we see in some of the lower and apparently hopeless races of mankind, or lending forth His power to enable them to do their horrid deeds of cruelty and to commit their acts of self-degradation. The modern doctrine of *evolution* through necessary laws has come to save us from the need of striving to maintain such a belief. To view Nature alone, apart from that conception, would make belief in a conscious personal Deity impossible for us to-day.

These facts are sometimes so strongly felt as to militate against the entire conception of Divine immanence. Thus Dr. Rainy, in his criticism of Professor Pfleiderer, while

accepting the doctrine on scriptural grounds, "in so far as it teaches that in God we live and move and have our being" (although this, surely, is rather the Divine transcendence), says: "The immanence of God assumed and granted does nothing to shed new light on the world of nature and man, nor are the difficulties which have always beset natural theology in the least alleviated by it. For example, in this presence of His, God upholds all forces and tendencies, alike the constructive and the destructive. He is immanent in the serpent and in the tiger as much as in the dove and the lamb. And in regard to man, He maintains our powers when we are using them well and when we are using them ill,—both alike as far as the doctrine of immanence is concerned,—not less truly immanent in us in the time of our errors and our sins than at any other time."<sup>1</sup> We could believe that the Divine Reason and Divine Power are so immanent, but not the Divine Personality.

It is these apparent contradictions to the thought of the presence and action of a personal God in Nature, while yet it is certain that Nature is the manifestation of Reason, that keep alive the conflict between Theism and Agnosticism, and give, in particular, a basis for the "Philosophy of the Unconscious." This theory has a ground in fact, but, manifestly, it cannot give us a full explanation of the world. The Reason manifested everywhere therein cannot be *in its source* unconscious; for this would be the negation of Reason. A Reason that did not know why it did things would be unreason.

If we remember from whence we get our modern idea of immanence, this will help us to a right understanding of the subject. It is from what we witness in the *development of an organism*. This proceeds under the influence of an immanent principle, which is the idea and potency of

<sup>1</sup> *The Supernatural in Christianity*, p. 29.

the organism. The immanence of God in the world we must therefore think of, not as that of a personal being *in* the world, but as that of the *Idea and Potency* of the world's development. How that idea of an organism which dominates its evolution is impressed on its primitive material, or expressed therein, we cannot tell, although there is every reason to believe that it is so. As little can we tell *how* God impresses on the material of the world or expresses in it the Divine Idea of the world-organism. But in every organism the Idea is *there*, and is the potency of its evolution. What is in the Idea is that which is realised in the actual, final result. But while there as Idea and potency from the beginning, it is only *gradually* that it becomes actually expressed in the developing organism. So in the world the Divine Reason is behind it all as its Idea, and also *in* it all as the immanent principle and power of its development. But its working has to begin with the lowest in order to provide a basis for the higher; and although it has expressed itself so far, and works on in these lower forms, it can only be *in* them as these forms permit of its presence. Although the Divine Reason behind it all remains ever conscious of itself, there is no conscious Reason working *in* Nature till animal life is reached; and there is no personal, rational, or ethical life *in* Nature till man appears. So, there is no personal Divine life *in* the world till Christ appears. As we have already seen, while we must think of God as in one aspect of His Being transcendent, we must think of Him as in another aspect immanent. But it is not a *personal* immanence, but such immanence as we behold in the idea or principle of any organism, which only gradually becomes expressed and realised. This does not mean that God has in one creative act so gone out from Himself into the unconscious as to be "buried" or "lost" in the world; but that, while in one aspect of His Being He goes out from

Himself,—as the Thought or Idea of the world,—so as to become the principle of its life, in another aspect of His Being He remains the Infinite Reason and Love, and it is only to return to Himself in His realised purpose in the creation that He so goes out from Himself. While for the purpose of creating, the Divine Reason and Love conditions itself in those forms which will result, through its in-working, in the rationally constituted universe, culminating in man, and, ultimately, through the continued working of the Holy Spirit both ethically and creatively, in Christ, It remains always equal to Itself. It is quite clear, indeed, that there cannot be any personal presence of God in Nature till we reach a personality in Nature capable of expressing the Divine personal presence, and this we do not see till we arrive at Christ. The Divine Idea is behind the whole, and is the power of it all; but God cannot impart *Himself* to the unconscious, impersonal, and unethical forms of the creation. But there is a growing entrance of the Divine Idea, and so of the Divine Reason, into the actual forms of the world's life, until that in God which is the Idea of the world's life becomes actually expressed in Christ. We must therefore think of God as going forth from Himself, and gradually conditioning His Being in the world,—the initial act being a Divine *Kenosis*, the Divine Reason and Love thus beginning at the lowest and rising to the highest, as under the action of the Divine Reason in Nature forms are provided for such increasing entrance; not as if in some external way, but as the necessary result of the continuous, progressive unfolding of the Divine Idea and working of the Divine Reason and Spirit, in the world. While it is certainly impossible for God to have expressed His ethical and personal being in the primitive material of the universe, or to have so gone out from Himself as, in any sense, to lose Himself in the world, it is not impossible

for the Divine Reason to have so potentially expressed itself, as the Idea and principle of the world, in that original material (call it "matter" or "ether," or let it be conceived as Force or Energy, it matters not) as that in the working-out of that Idea, so initially expressed, the entire life of the world, including the ethical life of man, and culminating (through the action of the Holy (ethical) Spirit also) in the Divine self-realisation in Christ, with His consciousness of essential Sonship, will be the result. *Such a Divine Kenosis* for the sake of creation would be in harmony with, and the natural outcome of, that Perfect Love which God is, and which finds and maintains itself for ever in self-sacrifice for the sake of others. It is the very life of the Divine Love to give itself and of the Divine Reason to realise itself in endless multiplication of itself, so to speak,—the One passing out into the many by the necessity of His life as perfect ethical Being. If there were no self-sacrifice in God as God, *man* would be ethically greater than his Creator. God, however, in another aspect of His Perfect Being, never loses Himself in the world, but remains for ever equal to Himself, while for ever giving Himself with unstinted freeness. While as the perfect Reason and Love He is for ever becoming the *immanent* life of the creation, He for ever remains the *transcendent* Reason and Love in which the whole development proceeds. And, for the final result in Christ, we must be careful to include in the Divine immanence the immanence of God in His Holy (ethical) Spirit; for Christ does not appear as the result of the processes of Nature merely, but of the action of the Holy Spirit in the ethical sense as well, apart from which His appearance would be inconceivable. As the Divine Idea unfolds itself, and beings arise capable of receiving spiritual influences from their environment, there comes to be a new immanence in these through such spiritual influences. These influences are one with God in His Spirit, and, as they are received, God

enters more and more fully into the world, till He becomes personally present in Christ. The immanence is always becoming an *emanence* which as environment influences the development and leads to a new immanence, and the whole process takes place *in* God, the Infinite and Eternal Reason and Love, who "fosters Nature in Himself, Himself in Nature," and in direct relation to whom man comes in his religious life, and God through the Holy Spirit becomes thus in a higher and ever-ascending way immanent in man. The Divine Reason and Love is for ever behind it all, and gradually realising itself in human form in and through it all. But there is no *personal* presence of God *in* the world (that is, in the forms of the world's life), or *in* man, till the Divine Idea of the creation realises itself in Christ. *This* is the great advance that we have in Christ.

The immanence of God implies, therefore, the presence of the Divine Idea of the world-organism as the potency of the entire development, and the *gradual* entrance of the Divine into the world as the Divine Idea unfolds itself. This is Evolution. It is always the unfolding of an Idea. And, for the beginning, and as far as "Nature" is concerned, it implies such a going forth of God from Himself, such an impersonal entrance of the Divine Reason and Love into the Creation, such a conditioning of His Being, in one aspect, as shall give rise to the universe, or be the potency of its development, and this we have described as being a real Divine *Kenosis*.

We may ask, further, indeed,—Does not the very idea of the immanence of God *as distinguished from* His transcendency imply all this? Is it not just in this that the distinction consists? God is in the world, and yet He cannot be in the world in the same way as He transcends it. God, as transcendent, is a *personal* Being: is it *another* personal Being who is operating in the Creation? We cannot think of God as working on the

material of the universe like an artificer from without. That would be *transcendent* action as opposed to immanent. In order to become the principle of the world's life, and to express the potency of the Divine Idea so that it shall operate immanently, we must think of God as in some way, in His great love, going out from "the form of God,"—the form of the perfect life of God,—and conditioning His Being so as to give rise to the universe (while He does not lose Himself therein),—so that, in the necessary development following therefrom, and including the action of His Holy (ethical) Spirit, the entire Idea of Divine Sonship which lies as potentiality behind the whole, shall be expressed in the consummation.

The very idea of *Creation* implies this. Creation is existence *out of God*. In order to create, God must, therefore, in some mysterious way, go out from Himself; the Unconditioned must become the Conditioned; the Absolute the Relative; the Transcendent the Immanent. And if creation is at the same time an Evolution or Development, the beginning must be made with the *lowest terms*. Yet it is *God* who must begin. How can He do this, save by going out from Himself and so far conditioning His Being in the primitive elements or monads of the universe, which, because of the potency thus imparted, proceed on that course of development which can never cease till the result is gained and the potency is revealed in its true character in the Incarnate Son? The world is thus founded in an act of Divine self-sacrifice, and it is for this very reason that self-sacrificing Love becomes revealed in man as the highest principle of life.

In the world, as science enables us to look back on its history, there has been manifestly a *striving* after something. It is not a mere *manifestation* of Reason, but rather the *realisation* of something by the Divine Reason. Dr. Edward Caird, in his *Gifford Lectures* (vol. ii. Lect. iii.),

maintains the organic conception of the universe, and says truly that the only way in which we can understand the world and interpret it as a unity is to regard it as an organism animated by a Divine principle of life. "The process of the world is an evolution,—the progressive manifestation of a principle that reveals itself more and more fully as the process advances." But it is not a mere *manifestation*. So viewed merely, the permanent and ultimate end would disappear. But if we think of it as *the self-realisation of God in human form* as God has gone out from Himself to become the principle of the world's life, we see that it has for its goal the Incarnation of the Eternal Son in God and man's eternal life as a son of God through Him. There is manifestly an aim in the working, a goal, which the Divine power operating in the universe has been seeking to reach. But here again we see that the operating power cannot be God absolutely, or God in personal form, but God as He imparts Himself to the universe, that He may find Himself again in "the Son of His Love" and in countless children in His own Image therein. It is the *One* going forth in His love to find Himself again in the *many*, not as a mere play of the Divine life, but as the expression of that Divine Reason and Love that God eternally is. That *striving* after an end which science shows us in the course of the world's development is something which we cannot harmonise with the presence and operation of a personal God therein. When we rise to organic life, we witness such a persistent striving after the highest and most perfect type, with such utter regardlessness of anything else, as has seemed to some (to G. J. Romanes, for example, and to Darwin himself) so irreconcilable with the idea of God; but which, while it cannot be harmonised with the operation of a personal Deity, follows, of necessity, from the pressure of an Idea imparted to the creation, seeking to realise itself therein,

and finding such self-realisation in the only possible, because the only rational, way. In the course of this effort after self-realisation, a ground must be laid in the material universe; then a basis for the higher life in that animal life with its self-seeking principle which alone can enable it to persist on the earth. In the course of the development of Life, proceeding according to the rational and necessary laws of life, many a strange and even hideous form appears, many fierce and terrible creatures come into being, a terrific warfare and carnage rages wherever there is life, and even man preys on his brother-man, with no interfering power to stay the most ruthless deeds. Man himself appears, not as the "paragon" he seems after ages of development, but as we see him still to-day in the heart of Africa or in Central Australia, a poor miserable creature, barely elevated above the animals around him, living in holes scooped out in the sand, and feeding on rats and lizards. In the presence of all this, how can we speak as if a personal God of Love were "immanent in Nature and in man"? Most pathetic of all is the story of man's religious striving—his striving after God—with the fearful errors and evils he has been suffered to fall into. We can understand it all as appearing in the course of a *development* in which impersonal Reason rules and is striving towards self-realisation in human form, but it is simply impossible to think of it as the direct work of the personal God of Love. To ask men to believe this is the way to make them Atheists or Agnostics. These phenomena—these seemingly strange and even "startling" facts of the creation—must be in some way reconciled with the accepted doctrine of the immanence of God in the creation, and they can in no way be reconciled with a personal immanence, but only with an impersonal one. There is always *so much* of the Divine Reason in the world, but we must distinguish between it and God as He is in Himself; and, till Christ

appears (although God as transcendent is around us ever, and may be, so far, within us by His Holy Spirit), there is no *personal* presence of God *in* the world or *in* man. It is in the view that we have suggested of a *gradual* entrance of the Divine into the world, as higher and higher forms are evolved, that we can find the removal of the difficulties referred to, and at the same time see how the culmination is reached in Christ, and how the Incarnation not only implies a process behind it, but is an actual new entrance of God into the world—a complete entrance in that human form which alone could adequately express His Life. Inasmuch as the Divine Idea was there from the first, and as this was, and could be, nothing less than the self-realisation of the Divine Life of Sonship in human form, the Divine immanence infallibly implies the Divine *emanence* when once the goal is reached; and it is this that gives us in Christ a genuine Divine-human consciousness. There is a continuous progress along a certain line till man is reached, all that could not so rise to the human being left behind; and then, again along a certain line, a new and higher course of progress, through the ethical Spirit, till Christ appears. All throughout this “eternal process moving on” the immanent is becoming increasingly emanent till God Himself appears in Christ.<sup>1</sup> And the goal having been reached in Christ, the God-man, there is nothing higher to be looked for on the earth. While the lower forms of life maintain themselves in virtue of the powers imparted, and while man’s whole nature will continue to develop, Evolution, as a cosmical Law for this world, continues to work only *through the immanent Spirit of Christ*, raising men as individuals into the same life as His,—the highest conceivable and the eternal life of the sons of God,—and bringing them into a real Brotherhood through the same Spirit. Just as there was a time when

<sup>1</sup> See further on this subject, Chapter X.

*physical* evolution, even in the case of man, ceased, and *psychical* development took its place, so now, even psychical evolution has been changed into *spiritual*; and, while man's knowledge of Nature and his power over it will continue to increase just as he becomes able to use these rightly, further *real progress* can only be reached in obedience to the influence of that Spirit of Christ and of God which has now been revealed as the immanent Spirit and potency of man's true and eternal life.

*Note.*—It is confessedly difficult to reconcile Immanence with Personality, even though we remember that Personality in God is something higher and greater than it is in us. Prof. Le Conte, in his interesting book, *Evolution and its Relation to Religious Thought*, holds it to be impossible to reconcile the two, and that we must simply accept both. The alternatives before us seem to him to be either the direct action of God in Nature, implying "the residence of God in Nature," or no Divine action in Nature at all. We have sought to show, in view of the many acknowledged difficulties in the way of believing in God as "residing in Nature," that the *action* of God in Nature does not involve "the residence of God in Nature"; that, while God, as the Eternal Reason and Love, is for ever behind it all and *spiritually* present, there is, at any given stage, only *so much* of what God is, actually *in* Nature; that, whilst He is for ever working in all as He has *conditioned* Himself therein, there is only a gradual entrance of God into the world, and that He is only personally *in* the world as He enters it in Christ. If the mark of a true Philosophy is, as Prof. Le Conte says, "its ability to include, combine, and reconcile two one-sided, partial, and mutually excluding views," the view we have endeavoured to present ought to commend itself to earnest minds.

According to Dr. Illingworth (*Divine Immanence*, chap. iii.), the analogies of "our essential immanence in our body," and "our contingent immanence in the works which we are free to create or not at will," give us the only

two probable alternatives for our conception of the *Divine* immanence. "The question, therefore, inevitably arises, under which of these analogies are we to think of God's relation to the world? Is the Universe His body or His work?" Dr. Illingworth thinks that the Trinitarian conception of God, which gives us "the complete immanence of the Father in the Son of which our own relation to our body is an inadequate type; and, as a result of this, His immanence in creation, analogous to our presence in our works," covers both kinds or degrees of immanence. He has to admit, however, that "we can only be *impersonally* present in our works"; but, if this be so, we have really *no* analogy for such *personal* indwelling in Nature as he affirms of "the Son." In the text we have sought to show that there is another alternative, free from these difficulties, namely, that derived from the way in which the Idea of every organism is present potentially from the first, but is only gradually manifested or expressed. If the world is an *organism*, this is surely the proper analogy to follow.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INCARNATION FROM THE STANDPOINT OF SCIENCE (*continued*)

#### 2. THE SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTION OF THE WORLD

LET us turn now to what may be termed the *purely* scientific conception of the world in its relation to the Incarnation. The dominant idea of modern science is that of a gradual evolution in which the progress is always from the simple to the complex, and by means of an immanent Power or "resident forces," with no breaks; but the conception varies according to the prominence given to the different factors concerned in the process. In this respect we may distinguish three theories: first, that which lays the stress on "*matter*," but which is not necessarily "*materialistic*"; second, that which regards "*energy*" as the main factor; and, thirdly, "*the mechanical theory*," which is, in the hands of some of its representatives at least, avowedly anti-theistical.

##### 1. *Matter*

It is now a long time since Dr. Tyndall startled the world by declaring that he beheld in "*matter*" "*the promise and potency of all terrestrial life*." The effect of this declaration can scarcely be realised by those belonging to a later generation. And yet there was nothing really alarming in the assertion. The idea (or complex of ideas)

of an organism is undoubtedly, in some way, impressed on its primal material, and it is just because this is so that the various forms of life, including the human, ultimately appear as that which they are, with all their varied inheritances. There is certainly nothing necessarily materialistic in the conception; for "matter" would be, in such case, simply the requisite expression and instrument of spirit, and, as in the case of every organism, that which was ideally and potentially present in the beginning would manifest itself in the ultimate outcome. Such a theory would give us the Incarnation as the necessary culmination of the entire development, and it is perhaps the simplest way in which we can represent to ourselves the relation of the idea to the universal organism. What "matter" is in its essence no one knows. We must think of it, not merely as represented in the stones and "dirt" of earth, but as the medium of the golden sunbeam, of the lightning flash, of the fairest revelation of beauty that has ever dawned on the human vision, yea, of the sublimest thought and holiest emotion that have ever filled the human mind and soul. In its ultimate particles (if it has such) it is entirely invisible, and even the molecules which atoms compose can be described as "so minute that millions upon millions, like the angels in the Schoolmen's discussion, can stand upon a needle's point," and "the smallest particle, invisible even to our most searching vision, may have a structure as complicated as any one of the heavenly bodies that circle round our sun."<sup>1</sup> And deeper and more extensive than the matter that we can see there is the entirely invisible ether, which is yet to us the medium of all that is

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Roscoe, British Association Address, 1887. Similarly Professor Allen Thomson has said that "in the minute ovum of the mammal, averaging about 1-150th of an inch in diameter, and weighing scarcely more than a minute fraction of a grain, there may be, it has been calculated, as many as five thousand billions of molecules" (British Association Address, 1877).

visible, and the powers and possibilities of which we are only beginning to understand. We can only know something of what matter is from what it does; and everywhere it makes itself known to us as the necessary medium, instrument, or expression of spirit. Spirit *must* have something to express itself in and work through, and "matter" it forms for that purpose. Schelling called it "precipitated spirit." As Carlyle said: "Matter, were it never so despicable, is spirit, the manifestation of spirit; were it never so honourable, can it be more?" According to many eminent scientists, matter has its origin in the invisible ethereal world. Whatever it may be as formed, it is certainly a creation of God, and it is that through which, so far as we know, *everything* is created. It is not only the "stuff" of that which we call the material world, but the medium of life and of thought itself. Thus Professor Crookes could justifiably, and without any necessary contradiction of Professor Tyndall, say in his Presidential Address to the British Association of 1898, that "in *life* he discovered the promise and potency of all forms of matter." Of course, matter *in itself* is nothing, and can do nothing. There is nothing at all improbable, therefore, in the suggestion that, in some way, on the matter of the universe, as on the matter of every organism, the creative idea has been so impressed or so impresses itself, or is *in* it so expressed, that the entire development of the universe necessarily follows, culminating in the manifestation of that idea in its truth in Jesus Christ. As Dr. Dallinger has said: "'The beginning' was thus, by the unsearchable mystery of a creative mind and will, the *potentiality* of all the universe through all its duration; which it only required 'time' in which the potential powers and modes should operate, to make actual, in the universe we see. As the highest mental powers and products of the most gifted of our race were originally potential in the

primitive ovum from which each took his origin, so it is congruous, and capable of being grasped by our thought, although it cannot be portrayed by our imagination, that the mind and will of the inscrutable Creator prevised and pre-ordered the whole series of conditions which by their immutable action, interaction, and rhythmic concurrence as ‘laws,’ evolved the universe.”<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dallinger does not carry the process higher than man in his highest powers; but what we maintain is that, if Jesus Christ was true man as well as God; if He really proceeded from the bosom of Humanity as well as from that of the eternal Father; if He truly was, as Dr. Orr says, “the best in Humanity”; nay more, if He was, as the New Testament declares, “the Son” through whom, as Ideal and principle, the universe was created,—He was bound to appear in the highest outcome of that which was the Divine working, just as surely as the idea appears in the complete expression of every organism whatsoever. Not as a *product* of Nature, but as the Son of God.

## 2. *Energy*

The present tendency, however, is to speak rather of “Force” or “Energy,” to which it is believed “matter” may be ultimately reducible, and to regard the universe as the manifestation of *one vast energy* for ever changing its form and progressing in its manifestations. Mere “energy,” of course, could never, in itself, form the rationally interpretable universe, for, as pure energy, it might work anyhow; but we know that same all-working energy within ourselves as Mind or Spirit,—being the same, as Herbert Spencer says, “as that which in ourselves wells up in the form of consciousness.” We cannot, therefore, think of it as being in itself *less* than that which it shows itself in ourselves to be. We must denominate it, not after its lowest,

<sup>1</sup> Fernley Lecture on *The Creator and the Creation*, pp. 40, 42, etc.

but after its highest manifestations, as Mind, Will, Spirit. Nor can we stop at ordinary human consciousness : *the Divine-human consciousness that showed itself in Christ is as much a fact of the progressive manifestation of this all-working energy as is ordinary human consciousness.* We must follow its manifestation onward till it reaches the highest, and knows and declares itself in Him who was at once the Son of man and the Son of God. If we stop short of this, we stop short of an adequate explanation of that universe which science itself describes to us ; but if we follow its manifestations onward till the all-working energy declares itself as Divine in Christ, we reach the only explanation that we can rest in, and we receive it *from that energy itself* as science teaches us to know it.<sup>1</sup> It cannot be mere *physical* Force or Energy that forms the ordered universe, or that rises to rational, moral, and spiritual life in man and to Divine consciousness in Christ ; it is the one eternal Divine Reason and Love—the one living God who is behind the whole—who progressively manifests Himself in these ascending forms. And although this conception of one vast all-working energy might seem to give us a conscious spiritual Being working *as such* in the universe (and it is often so taken, and thus rises scarcely, if at all, above Pantheism in its results), it is manifest that, as mere physical energy, *God* could not be *in* the world (while He is never to be actually severed from it), and, as we have already sought to show, each successive rise in manifestation witnesses to a new entry of the Divine into the actual forms of the world's life, as the result of the progressive evolution of that Divine Idea which is behind the whole process.

<sup>1</sup> Some theological writers would follow up the working out or evolution of this energy as far as *man* ; but we have no right to stop there ; nor can we thus get a *Divine* interpretation of the world. If we are really to be able to go back to *God* at the beginning, it can only be as we see *God* manifested at the end.

### 3. *The "Mechanical" Conception*

By some, however, even the present qualities of the atoms of matter are regarded as the result of development, and this is accepted as a probable hypothesis by the authors of *The Unseen Universe* (chap. v.). Sir Henry Roscoe in his British Association Address also tells us that certain "remarkable results of chemical investigation, though they by no means furnish a proof of the supposition that the elements are derived from a common source, clearly point in this direction." Now this seems to suggest *an extreme simplicity* in the beginning, and it is (or was) the ambition of some representatives of science to give us a doctrine of the origin and evolution of the universe, which, in the words of the late Mr. Grant Allen, "will withdraw the genesis of the cosmos from the vicious circle of metaphysical reasoning, and account for it by the continuous action of physical and natural principles alone." Mr. Herbert Spencer has given the formula of this evolution in terms widely accepted as substantially correct, in the well-known words: "Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity, and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation." Its most impressive exemplification is given in "the Nebular Hypothesis," according to which, "stars and suns and solar systems consist of materials once more diffusely spread out through space, and now aggregated around certain fixed and definite nuclei by the gravitational force inherent in their atoms and masses." The total conception thus derived is summed up by Mr. Grant Allen as follows: "It exhibits to our eyes, or to our scientific imagination, the picture of the universe as a single whole, a picture of its evolution as a continuous process.

One type of matter diffused throughout space ; one gravitational attraction binding it together firmly in all its parts ; one multiform energy quivering through its molecules or traversing its ether in many disguises of light and heat and sound and electricity. It unfolds for us in vague hints the past of the universe, as a diffuse mass of homogeneous matter, rolling in upon its local centres by gravitational force, and yielding up its primitive energy of separation as light and heat to the ethereal medium" ("The Progress of Science," *Fortnightly Review*, June, 1887). The question suggested is, Where do you find God in such a beginning ? Of course, science cannot show us any absolute beginning ; but, taking that of our own solar system according to the Nebular Hypothesis (which is only an hypothesis, however), we seem to see nothing in the beginning but "matter" and "energy,"—the energy which sends the matter forth into an inconceivably wide diffusion throughout space, and then, as "attraction of gravitation," brings it in on itself again. The whole development seems thus to result, without any break, through what Mr. Spencer calls "the persistence of Force," or rather of Energy, in its alternating kinetic and potential forms. And—although it is often forgotten that Mr. Spencer himself has said that all phenomena may be equally well expressd in terms of mind as in terms of matter, according as we set out with the one or with the other (*First Principles*, pp. 558, 559, 5th ed.)—such a conception is sometimes avowedly put forth as dispensing with the ideal or metaphysical (in plain words, the Divine) element in the creation. And truly, when we read the accounts given of the necessary progress of undifferentiated or homogeneous matter into all the forms which now constitute the universe, we are apt to ask ourselves where there is any need for God, or any room for Him in the process? There is, certainly, a sublimity of simplicity in the conception. But is there not something suggestive of *God* in that very

sublimity? We know for certain that the outcome manifests *Reason*, and, in whatever way we may conceive it, there must have been *Reason* in this same simple beginning. The irrational can never, by any virtue of its own, grow into the rational; there must have been, therefore, "in the beginning," *Reason* as it had conditioned itself for the very purpose of the creation, and the whole potentiality of the development lay in this simple fact, and in the presence of the Divine Reason behind it all.

To criticise this theory a little more in detail (for this is the only one that can be deemed anti-theistic), it is manifest that "matter," in some form, has to be assumed to begin with, and Dr. Tyndall's question, "Whence comes it?" remains unanswered. "Force" too, or "Energy" from without the diffused mass, although operating in it, has also to be assumed to account for the primary diffused condition to which its inherent energy of development is due; and again, we have the unanswered questions, "Whence comes it?" "What is its origin?" "Matter" is there, and Force is there, in the beginning, with all their potencies, and it is precisely these potencies that have to be accounted for. Not only are matter and Force there, but *Reason* is there as that which shall be expressed in, and that which shall dominate, the entire process. For the Universe is, if it is anything, a rational Universe. Moreover, the conception given of "a great whole" in which all the parts are interrelated and working in perfect unity, is precisely that of an organism, and an organism can only be conceived as co-ordinated by an inner principle or dominated by an idea. It is indeed organic evolution that gives the suggestion and is the type of the wider cosmic evolution. But, not to speak of the dependence of all organic evolution on its environment, it is certain that every organic germ we know of represents, in some way, more or fewer—in most cases a great number—of spiritual and ideal conceptions,

belonging both to the type, which is continually reproduced, and to the individual characteristics of parents and ancestors, which are handed down, and which must be, in some manner, impressed on the molecules of the germ. How else can one germ inevitably, under all circumstances rendering growth possible, develop into a tiger, another into an eagle, another into a man, and in each case with peculiar hereditary characteristics? As Dr. Allman said in his Presidential Address to the British Association, 1879: "Of two particles of protoplasm, between which we may defy all the power of the microscope, all the resources of the laboratory to detect a difference, one can develop only to a jelly-fish, the other only to a man, and one conclusion alone is here possible, that deep within them there must be a fundamental difference which thus determines their inevitable destiny, but of which we can know nothing and can assert nothing beyond the statement that it must depend on their hidden molecular constitution." So that the analogy of organic evolution—the only evolution we can be said to *know*—gives us the best possible foundation for an idealistic or spiritualistic conception of the evolution of the universe as a whole, and ought to suggest the one-sidedness and utter insufficiency of any theory that ignores the ideal element, or that fails to make it primary. Thought—the Ideal—is always first and deepest, and "matter," in whatever form, is only that through which it works and expresses itself. If we are to take the analogy of an organism, it is simply impossible to conceive of the "matter" we start with as absolutely simple or entirely homogeneous; while, at the same time, the elements, as we know them, may have been developed from one primitive form.

If, therefore, science should yet lead to the conception of "a primitive matter" from which matter in its distinct elemental forms, as we now know it, has been developed, we must still see the *potency* of such development and its

inevitableness, indeed, residing, or in some way operating, in that primitive matter. The universe will still have a spiritual or ideal side from the first, which must become fully manifest in its complete development. This follows, indeed, from the most absolutely simple and the most purely mechanical form in which the process of development can be represented. Suppose we start with atoms absolutely simple, in a widely diffused condition. If there was a definite measure of Force that drove them out into this extremely diffused condition, then, when that Force had spent itself in that work, the atoms that were so driven out would certainly have a tendency to return in on themselves (represented by Gravitation), and in this way, owing to differences in temperature, etc., there might conceivably be developed, not only the masses, but the more complex molecules and atoms of the present system. The energy retained would continue to work on as that definite quantity of energy we know to be working in such varied forms in the physical universe, so that through its transformations, or as the result of its working, all that we see comes to exist. But so far from giving us a merely mechanical conception of the universe, this would lead us to *a spiritual explanation of all its powers and forces*, including gravitation itself. For what would it all be due to? Surely to the Power that formed the primitive elements—conceive them as you may, and call them what you will—and that was represented by the original separating Force. And if from such absolutely simple beginnings the universe has developed as the orderly, rationally - interpretable, reason-manifesting universe we know it to be, this surely leads us all the more to admire the *Reason* that has dominated the entire evolution, from such simple beginnings to its grand consummation. It is the *Reason* that is behind all and over all, and that so expressed itself “in all” in “the beginning,” that governs and secures the entire development. That

primitive matter, however we may conceive it,—call it simply “points of resistance,” or what we will,—*was* the expression of the Divine Reason as it had gone forth creating. It was, even in the simplest and most elemental form imaginable, *the expression of that Reason as it had conditioned itself for the creation of the universe.* It is just the fact that the first arrangement of matter, absolutely simple as it seems, was such an expression of the Divine Reason so conditioning itself, that gives the potentiality of the entire development,—not the atoms considered in themselves, nor the mere physical force or energy. All the laws that begin to act are rational laws, and, let the subsequent action be what it may, it *cannot but* be the continuous expression of the Divine Reason progressively realising itself in the fulness of its truth. And, finally, while that which we see in the physical universe is solely *Reason* working, yet, since the Divine Reason is also in its truth the Divine Love, therefore, as the development proceeds, this Love will also begin to show itself, shining first as an ideal in men’s consciences already illuminated by Reason, and working on till at length it perfectly manifests itself in a personal form in Him who is the incarnation of God’s eternal Ideal of the creation, and, as such, both its “Alpha and its Omega.” The perfectly simple beginning, therefore, which is supposed to exclude God, not only embraces Him, and is the manifestation of God as He conditions His Being for the creation of the Universe, but leads on infallibly to the ultimate Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER IX

### MIRACLE—THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH

A VERY important principle of modern science, and of the thought that has been formed under its influence, is that of *Continuity*. This is no ‘fetish,’ but is simply the manifestation of that principle of Reason that works in everything by the only conceivable nexus of cause and *consequence*. Law reigns in every sphere, and while Law does not “bind God,” it is always through Law that *He works*; all that happens follows in an orderly succession, and in a closely linked chain of cause and effect, or unbroken sequence. Evolution is the steady unfolding and self-realisation of the Creative Thought present as an *immanent* principle of life. There must be orderly and continuous development, and no “interferences,” “breakings into,” or abrupt entrances of the supernatural into the natural are admissible. It is this, of course, that is at the root of the prevalent modern rejection or doubt of “the miraculous”; and certainly the miraculous, as it has often been defined and described, is entirely out of harmony with modern thought, and impossible of real belief. In the words of the authors of *The Unseen Universe*, “Until of late years, the divines who have asserted the actual occurrence of these (miraculous) events have attached to this assertion an hypothesis of their own, representing the events in question as absolute interferences of the Divine Governor with His usual physical procedure. Each was thus supposed to represent in its physical aspect something that could not possibly be deduced from that which

went before, or that followed after": which is such a breach of the principle of continuity as, if it were admitted, would go far to land us in "permanent intellectual confusion."<sup>1</sup> Of course, the *Supernatural* cannot be dispensed with; it is essential to any form of Christianity, and to anything that can be called religion; but it is equally essential to Nature itself; the natural, in its gradual, progressive development, can only be regarded as being throughout the expression and manifestation of the *Supernatural*.

The *miraculous*, however, implies that, besides that constant action of the *Supernatural* which constitutes Nature (that which is produced), there have been special actions of the *Supernatural* on or in the order of Nature; and it is *this* which it is so difficult for those who believe the order of Nature to be that of the *Divine* action to receive. It is especially with reference to such a miracle as that which is assumed in the entrance of the Son of God into the world that the difficulty presses. When God comes to be personally present in the world, the case is different. The miracles wrought by Christ in whom God has entered the natural order in possession of the Divine Power in its fulness in human form, stand, therefore, on quite another footing. These have by no means the same inherent difficulty, and must be judged of simply by the canons of historical criticism. In their case a material organism is there, standing in Nature and able to act on it. But, with respect to the miraculous birth, we have what seems at least a breaking into the order of Nature, and this creates a strong presumption against it.

The idea of "the miraculous," however, even in this sense, has fulfilled very important functions, not only in religion, but in the general progress of humanity, especially by creating the conviction that the Power which we see at any moment working in Nature is by no means the whole of

<sup>1</sup> *Unseen Universe* (2nd ed.), p. 60.

the Divine Power,—a conviction absolutely necessary for religion and for progress.<sup>1</sup> It is, we apprehend, in the light of the necessity for this conviction that many in our own day earnestly maintain the need for belief, not merely in the Supernatural in its normal working in Nature and on man, but in “the miraculous” as well. There is a deep truth in their contention, which needs to be conserved. For if the power which we see operating at any given moment be the entire Divine power, if God be only *thus* immanently with us, religion would seem to be impossible. Nor could we believe in the full Incarnation of God in man as the outcome of the Divine Power *so conditioned* merely.

“Non-miraculous Christianity” is too frequently only Christianity emptied of its most distinctive contents. What we wish to show is that the great Christian facts *in their full significance* are independent of the question of “the miraculous” as it is usually understood—that, in the normal working of God those results are reached which have been described as “miraculous.” Without entering on the general question, we would make just two remarks,—one drawn from experience, and the other from the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. (1) The ablest argumentation on the subject has little or no effect on either the preservation or the restoration of faith. Not only so, but, when the great Christian facts are rested on external “miracle,” which, *for us*, rests again on documents exposed to criticism, and can only be upheld by argument, we find that, when the evidence or the arguments appear to be shaken, the truths also that have been rested on them are apt to fall. (2) The external manner in which the supernatural is viewed by many and identified with “the miraculous,” as if it were something different from the Divine in its normal working, suggests the question whether this does not carry in it

<sup>1</sup> This value of miracle is well put by Dr. Allen, *Christian Institutions*, Book II. chaps. iii. and v.

something of that old externalism which characterised the views of many in the early Church with respect to the Spirit's operations, and from which Paul sought to deliver the Church. God is Spirit, and it is on *Spirit* that Spirit acts; while *embodied* Spirits, of course, also influence and act through their material embodiment.

The difficulties in the way of hearty acceptance of the physical miracle supposed to be implied in the entrance of God as Son into the world, as it is commonly regarded, are undoubtedly very great,—so great, and to many so insuperable, that it behoves evangelical Christians to be very careful how they set up its acceptance as a *sine qua non* of the Incarnation, and thus raise a barrier that will exclude continually increasing numbers from the full evangelical faith. The way in which the miraculous birth is commonly taken would imply, not merely a Divine influence operating on the mind of the Virgin Mother, and so, possibly, influencing the germ from which the new being was to arise, but *the actual new creation* of a physical germ; and it is this that creates the difficulty. It is unlike God's way of working, which is through His rational laws in their normal operation, and through the natures that He has brought into existence. Moreover (as we may yet see more fully), from the standpoint of Christian faith itself, this would not give us the pre-existent Son of God incarnate, but *a new creation*; nor would it be the redemption of the old Humanity. It is certainly true that Humanity cannot of itself produce its own Redeemer. It is also true that the Divine nature as it manifested itself in Christ required an adequate organism for its expression; but to say, as is often done, that "the moral miracle" requires "a physical miracle," is to use the word "miracle" in two quite different senses, and to forget the constant presence and working of God, both spiritually and physically. And if we follow out the line of thought indicated in previous pages,—remembering

that *the spiritual* is the true supernatural, and that the aim of God in all His previous working in the world was just the production of this very Child of His Spirit,—we ought to be able to reach a point of view where we can conserve all that is meant by “the miraculous,” and yet not be committed to the abrupt physical miracle.

We are not, indeed, in a position to absolutely *deny* the physical miracle, even so conceived,—denial is always perilous, especially in the presence of the great mystery of life, and of creative action in general; and if this matter were clearly and unmistakably part of Divine revelation or historical fact, we should be bound to accept it, however many and great the difficulties. But it is well known that as a scriptural doctrine or fact it rests on anything but a strong foundation. The narratives as given in the first three Gospels have been subjected to searching criticism, and are rejected by not a few as unhistorical. Harnack holds that they arose from a wrong interpretation of Isaiah vii. 14, which no one will now maintain means that Immanuel should be born “of one who at the birth was still a virgin.”<sup>1</sup> Even Canon Gore, while he holds the historical evidence to be “strong and cogent,” admits that it is not such as “to compel belief.”<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless these narratives may not only enshrine a deep ethical truth, but may point to a physical or creative fact, the reality of which is implied in the entrance of the Son of God, or God as Son, into the world, and apart from which it is not possible to understand the personality presented in even the first three Gospels. What the narrative *directly* affirms is a new creative act of God, an act of God through the Holy Spirit—which is also the creative Spirit—in the physical sphere, in virtue of which a child enters the world without human paternity, and so

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. of Dogma* (E.T.), i. p. 100 (note).

<sup>2</sup> *Dissertations*, p. 64.

that "the Holy thing" thus born should be called "the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). This, as it stands, seems a stupendous miracle, and an irruption of the spiritual and Divine into the physical and natural sphere so entirely out of harmony with the idea of evolution as "an orderly process by means of resident forces," as to be incredible. The difficulty of believing it thus is, moreover, greatly increased by the angelophanies, and, indeed, by the general tone of the narrative; still more by the knowledge that the word in Isaiah rendered "Virgin" does not necessarily mean more than "a young woman," it might even be a married woman; and by the fact that the two genealogies given are (as is now generally acknowledged) *both* of Joseph, and neither of them of Mary, as might have been expected had Jesus, "according to the flesh," been the son of Mary only. All this strongly suggests that we have here narratives *earlier* than the completely developed doctrine of the Incarnation as we find it in the New Testament, although, perhaps, not the very earliest.

THE ETHICAL AND PHYSICAL TRUTHS IMPLIED: AT ONCE  
THE RESULT OF A PROCESS AND AN ACTUAL NEW  
DIVINE ENTRANCE INTO THE WORLD

We are far from the mark, however, when we attempt to explain such a biblical narrative as mere myth or legend, or when we go to find parallels in the histories of Buddha and Plato and other great men; or when we regard it as merely "a type of the universal incarnation." It is, rather, a narrative in the naïve Biblical style, corresponding to the narratives of the first creation in Genesis, and, like these, it expresses in semi-poetical form the great fact that underlay the second creation in Christ,—the entrance of the new man, the second Adam, into the world. It expresses, in the first place, a great *ethical* and *spiritual* truth. Christ

was truly and distinctively the Child of the Holy Spirit. It was certainly *through the Holy Spirit* that He became incarnate; from the first He was the Child of the Spirit as distinguished from all previous births "of the flesh" merely; He did not need to be "born again." But, secondly, the Spirit, as operative in the world, is both the holy, ethical Spirit, acting through ethical influences on man's ethical nature, and the *creative* Spirit through whose power the creative work is carried onward to its consummation. The Spirit works physically, so to speak, as well as ethically, although always according to a Divine *order* of working. Therefore, to see in Christ the direct product of the Spirit, while yet He comes forth from the womb of Humanity, need imply no abrupt breaking in of the supernatural into the natural, nor anything out of harmony with what we see in the course of the world's development. If the world proceeded from God, the action of His Spirit is necessary for its first birth in time and space; and if it be true that we can never get something from nothing, or the greater from the lesser in itself, then, as the world has developed, the Power to which it owes all its progress has been ever active, and at each successive appearance of anything distinctively higher *in kind* from what preceded it, we have a special manifestation of the action of that creative Spirit and Power which can never be severed from the developing world, but is ever there and operative as the immanent principle of its life. It is the opposite view—that which gives us what Professor Henry Drummond has called "an occasional God," only appearing in special Divine interventions—that makes it so difficult for some to believe in the true supernatural, or in "the miraculous" in the true meaning of the conception. It must be, as he well says, "all God," and not an occasional one. But *at certain epochs* we behold more manifestly the action of the Divine creative principle, and witness its fuller entrance into, and

manifestation through, the forms of the world's life. Dr. Wallace's idea of the special influx of the spiritual abruptly, and as if from without, seems inconsistent with a truly scientific conception of evolution, and with the idea of the world as being throughout the product of the Divine Reason that progressively realises itself therein. We must have the spiritual present and operative from the beginning and continuously,—in some measure expressed in *everything*. Nor is it necessary to suppose that the Divine Power always present and working needed to enter in some new and external way in order to develop any part of the rational, moral, and spiritual nature of man. There was *more* than mere physical power present and operating from the first; and Body and Mind develop simultaneously. But, as Professor Le Conte has said,—while adhering strictly to the idea of a progressive evolution in which the one Power is present from the first,—“with every new form of Force, with every new birth of Energy into a higher plane, there appears new, unexpected, and, previous to experience, wholly unimaginable properties and powers.”<sup>1</sup> These must also have sometimes appeared *suddenly* and (to appearance) as a great “leap” beyond all that had previously been manifested. Science, for example, assures us that there was a time when there could be no *life* in the world, and, if the living is higher than the non-living, the organic than the inorganic, some Power must have operated, continuously no doubt, to raise the lower to the higher, thus imparting, or in some way bringing into play, the higher element, which, once there, continued to work on according to its own laws, in virtue of which the inorganic forces are made subservient to the vital. In the appearance of life, therefore, there was a sudden and an immense advance; a higher order of existence made itself manifest, and a higher measure of the Divine all-working Spirit

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution and its Relation to Religious Thought*, pp. 137, 138, etc.

thereby entered the actual forms of the world's life. But there was no "break" or "interference" or abrupt entrance of anything into Nature. It was only after, in the continuous working of the creative Power, matter had reached, so to speak, "a certain stage of elaboration" (and in this very fact), that the life, always present in its potency, was able to manifest itself; and it did so in entire harmony with the principle of continuity. So, when *man* appeared, with the organism or physical structure which is the basis of his life perfected, an entirely new world was made manifest, and quite a new course of evolution began, the goal of which was no longer physical, but psychical perfection. As in the case of individual birth, "there is," again to quote Professor Le Conte, "a sudden entrance into a new world, the sudden appearance of a new Creature with entirely different capacities—capable of separate spirit life."<sup>1</sup> Yet although the advance here was stupendous and the creative action most real, there was no abrupt entrance of something that was not there and continuously operating from the beginning. It was the gradual perfecting of the physical structure which made it possible for this new psychical creation to appear; and in its appearance a very much higher measure of that which was the potency of the creation from the beginning manifested itself,—in other words, *entered the world*. So, that which we behold in the appearing of Christ, is the entrance into the world of a distinctly new and higher kind of Being,—man *wholly after the Spirit*, man as the Son of God. The Divine life can now realise itself as man, God as Son can express Himself in that human form He had gone forth into the creation to seek. Through the operation of that Spirit which was both the Divine Ethical influence and the Divine creative power there has become possible the actual

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution and its Relation to Religious Thought*, p. 321; vide also Professor Harris' *Philosophical Basis of Theism*, p. 496, etc.

entrance *into the world*, in a personal degree, of that which was all along behind its evolution as its Divine Idea. But we need not suppose, any more than in the case of life and of man, any break in continuity, or abrupt entrance of the Divine, or physical miracle in the ordinary sense of the term.<sup>1</sup> The action proceeded from the Divine Word or Spirit as it was creatively conditioned and working in the universe, and as it had been all along rising in and operating on man to raise him to ever higher and higher life. It was only after Humanity had, through the ethical and psychical as well as physical working of the Divine Spirit, the requisite susceptibility developed within it, and, as we shall see, organically expressed in its constitution, that the Divine could so manifest itself and the Son of God, or God as Son, thus enter the world. It was something new; yet its appearance, like that of life and of man, was conditioned by the previous preparatory working of the one Divine Spirit, and was the result of the continuous working of that Spirit. It is not a new Humanity externally superimposed on the old, so to speak, that we witness in Christ; but a higher, even a *Divine* Humanity, taking up into itself the old (in harmony with all previous Divine working), and making it a Humanity wholly after the Spirit, that is, wholly after God, in which God and man were truly one,—the Son in God, the Eternal Ideal of the creation, becoming thus actually, and in the most literal sense, *incarnated*. The Incarnation was thus *at once a process and a direct new entrance of God as Son into the forms of the world's life.* It

<sup>1</sup> To uphold Evolution in general and yet maintain a special Divine intervention for the birth of Christ is to depart from *Evolution*, and to bring in something new from without. To have a fund of possible Divine intervention always to fall back upon is to miss the real difficulty entirely. There would be *no* difficulty in such a view of God's relation to the world—*anything* can be thus accomplished. This is the weak point in Mr. Griffith-Jones' interesting book, *The Ascent through Christ*.

was that which was all along behind and working in the process completely realising itself.

There is implied in this the preparation of an *organism* capable of expressing the life of the Son of God; but before seeking to show how this was provided through the entire previous working of the Divine Spirit, we would point out some

#### MISCONCEPTIONS OF "THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH"

This subject has often been so greatly misconceived as to create an almost invincible prejudice against even that which is meant by it. This is the case when the narratives are interpreted with a bald literalism, when the stress is laid on the merely physical miracle, and men made to feel that they cannot be Christians or believers in the real Incarnation of God in Christ, unless they accept a physical marvel, which, perhaps, they are quite unable to accept. Above all, to identify this birth through the Holy Spirit, as given in these narratives, with the coming into the world in some external way from above of the Son of God, conceived as a separate person from the Father in something like the human sense of personality, and who only enters the world by this strictly miraculous act, is to misunderstand these narratives completely, and to create a serious and needless difficulty in the way of belief. Even a modern writer like Canon Gore, who seeks most laudably to show that the Incarnation was both natural and supernatural, lays himself open here to serious criticism. When, in order to defend the miraculous, it is said that God "violates the customary method of His action, breaks into the common order of events, in order to manifest the real meaning of nature, and make men alive to the true character of the order which their eyes behold," that there is "a disturbance of the superficial order in the interests

of the deeper rational order" (*Bampton Lectures*, p. 45), there is a distinct departure from anything that can be called "natural," and the needless creation of a prejudice against the truth. Is not the "natural order" a divinely appointed one? Is it really a "superficial order"; or has it not, rather, its roots deep down in the nature of Him of whom it is, in some degree at least, the expression? Such conceptions seem to be founded in quite a mistaken idea of the relation of God to the world, and interpose a most serious barrier to intelligent faith. The Divine Reason can never be at issue with Itself.

Again, when it is said that "the Son of God at a certain moment of time took flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary," most assuredly this is *not* what these narratives teach. They do not speak of the entrance of a Divine Being *thus* into the world, as if He contracted Himself to the measure of a human embryo; but of *a creative act of God*, by which was produced a *new* Divine-Human Person, to be called, for this reason, "the Son of God" (see Luke i. 35). Whether the idea that the Eternal Son of God contracted Himself so as to be born as a little child be thinkable or not, it is certainly not what the narratives of the miraculous birth in these Gospels say.

If we take the more sober view, that it was the *humanity*, or "the human nature," with which the Son of God united Himself that was thus created, we must remember that there can be no such thing as a human nature apart from a human *person*, who is at least potential. We would thus have two persons, the human person and the Divine Person who unites Himself with the human. If we say with Dr. Dorner, that it was simply the *receptivity* that was produced by the previous Divine working in the world,—the need of acknowledging which Dr. Dorner clearly saw,—to which the Logos could gradually impart Himself, becoming from the first one with that which was so divinely

produced, we have still the *duality* left between the Logos and the developing Humanity to which He so imparts Himself,—we have the human person *and* the Logos who unites Himself therewith,—a real and true *unity* is not reached. Indeed, no form of doctrine which supposes an entrance of the Son of God into the world *as if from without*, in some moment of time, can ever give us both God and man in Christ, in one Person with no loss either to the Deity or to the humanity; and, as already said, our modern knowledge of both nature and revelation has placed us in a position where we should be able to conceive the matter quite differently and much more truly; and yet it is only coming back to the Spirit's teaching, in the Fourth Gospel especially, wherein we have the developed doctrine of a real Incarnation of the pre-existent Son of God.

So again, when it is said that the physical miracle is necessary for the "moral miracle" presented in the life of Christ, is not this to confound the physical with the moral, and to do away with the moral glory of Christ as our Redeemer? If by a miracle of creation He was exempted from the common Humanity, how does *that* Humanity become redeemed in Him? And how can such a physical act produce a really moral result? If Jesus was a new moral *creation*, what becomes of the old Humanity? and how can there be a *moral* creation? Would He thus be truly *man*? Canon Gore asks in his *Dissertations* (p. 66), "If Jesus was a new moral creation, is it possible this new moral creation can have involved anything short of a new physical creative act?" But a new moral creation resting on a new physical creation is, to say the least, very dubious as regards its moral content, and it fails to show us the redemption or the consummation of our *old* Humanity in Christ. With this quality of His person, we are told (*ibid.*), His method of redeeming us consists—"by a new birth, the fundamental reconstruction of the moral being on

a new basis, and that basis Himself—to reproduce in each man the quality of His own life by bestowal of His own Spirit.” But this new birth in us is not (unless on some Sacramentarian theory) directly physical, but moral, and if it does not require a physical act or basis to make *us* new creatures, the argument from Christ’s method is turned the opposite way. It is asked again (*ibid.*), “If the moral character is new, must not the stuff of the Humanity have been new also?” Here we have again that confounding of the physical and the moral which is so characteristic of Sacramentarian teaching. Moreover, how could He get that new, sinless “stuff” of our Humanity from Mary, unless *she* were sinless? The doctrine leads logically up to the immaculate conception; for the Son of Mary must have partaken of her nature, else He would not be Mary’s son. To exclude the father, or paternal element, is not sufficient for the purpose assumed. We shall see in the next chapter in what the “sinlessness” of “the nature” really consisted, and how it was divinely brought about. Canon Gore says (*Dissertations*, p. 67) that “the authority of the Church is committed” to the doctrine “as a fact, beyond recall.” The same thing has been affirmed with respect to many doctrines that have been recalled; but if it be as he says, then surely it is all the more necessary rightly to understand the fact. Mere Church authority will not make it more acceptable, and it is just these misconceptions of this doctrine—affirming spiritual results from physical processes—that are the main support of priestly pretensions, and, as long as they are entertained, Sacerdotalism and Sacramentarianism will have a firm ground whereon to stand. Besides, as thus conceived, it really dishonours God’s great sacrament of matrimony, one which needs, in the present day especially, to be, above all others perhaps, elevated and hallowed; it is made to appear unfit for God to use.

The fact, as simply narrated in the Gospels, has none of these *doctrinal implications*. It is the introduction of a higher form of life into the world, through the birth of one who appears as the product of the direct action of the Holy Spirit in its creative capacity on a Humanity in which the needed preparedness has been inwrought through the ethical working of that Spirit, handed on by the physical agencies which subserve it, just as life was infused when matter had been prepared for its reception, and as man appeared when the physical organism had reached the requisite perfecting. Whether we must think of the paternal element as altogether dispensed with, and regard the conception of Christ as the supreme manifestation of the complete power of the Spirit over the flesh, analogous to what we may again behold in another form in the Resurrection of Christ; or look upon it as used by God in the course of His orderly working, is a secondary and altogether subordinate question, which, perhaps, we are not in a position to thoroughly discuss, and concerning which each one should be free to form his own honest opinion, according to his conviction whether there is evidence for such a fact or not. Certainly a merely literal interpretation of these narratives cannot compel belief, but is more likely to miss the real truth underlying them. That truth is, we repeat, that Jesus was the Son of God, born, not of the flesh merely or predominantly, but of the *Spirit*, which was from the first the deepest and essential principle of His life (as it is that of the Son in God); that while He was "the Son of David according to the flesh" (and whether through one parent or through two surely makes no difference in the fact), He was also "the Son of God according to the Spirit of Holiness," God's own Son, that is God as Son, incarnate, *as the result of the whole working of the Word or Spirit in Nature and in man*. Christ, we repeat, is by no means the product of man or of

His race or of Nature; but of God's own continuous working. He is truly, in His Divine-human form, "the Child of the Holy Spirit." It was *through the Spirit* that He was incarnated. In His essence God is an *ethical* being, and He could only be born into the world, not through an abrupt physical or semi-physical act, but as the culmination of *an ethical process*, which was the self-realisation of God as Son in human form. But this process had also all along a physical side, and, far from denying the physical "miracle" in its true sense, we have sought to show the reality it indicates,—that, whether the human paternal element be excluded or not, there is, in either case, a real epochal manifestation of the Divine working, making possible a real new, even personal entrance of God into the world.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ORGANIC PREPARATION AND THE GRADUAL INCARNATION IN CHRIST

#### I

As we have said, the Incarnation implies such an *organism* as can be the adequate expression of the life of the Son of God, or God as Son, in the world. But the production of this was precisely that which was aimed at in the entire working of the Word and Spirit of God in men. It was implied in the original Divine Idea of the world; for it was only through such an organism that the life of God could possibly be realised and manifested in the world. It was therefore bound to appear when the Idea of the world-organism attained its full expression; nay, it was just in this alone that that Idea *could* attain its full expression. There was thus a positive as well as a negative "preparation" for the coming of Christ, and a steady unresting Divine working towards that end from the very beginning. When we read the account of that which, although in some measure positive, appears rather, ultimately, as a negative preparation amongst other nations, and see the inability in which they were found with respect to the realisation of a higher than "the natural life," it brings out into all the greater prominence the positive preparation for and actual advance *towards* that higher life which God had been making amongst those who are most truly designated "His own people Israel." And although there was a

negative element there too, yet the positive was always being, in however narrow a line, carried forward, and this positive preparation was finding *organic* expression in that line. Israel was "the Servant of Jehovah," through whom Redemption should come to the world.

It was the same with Religion as it was with Reason and Morality. These last are not mysteriously imparted gifts to primitive man, but in each case a growth. We know now that these are slowly organised in man through his experience, and the same thing is true of Religion. As Reason and Morality become organised in man, showing themselves in the developed Intellect and Conscience, so does Religion, showing itself in the spiritual element that increasingly enters into man's actual nature, and becomes organised, even physically, in his constitution. The religious development of Humanity consists just in this increasing entrance of the spiritual, so that it becomes a higher principle than "the flesh," and is at length the predominant principle. This was the work that the Spirit of God was doing in all the world, but it was in the people of Israel that the most susceptible material was found for this specifically ethical, religious development. By the natural laws of inheritance and progress the results of the Divine working were organically expressed and handed on from generation to generation, till, "in the fulness of the time," God could, as the culmination of His whole working in Israel, and indeed in all the world—into contact with the Divine working in which Israel had been brought by a remarkable series of providences—thus gradually realise His Divine life in the world. Before Christ appeared, the unique prophetic inspiration had, probably, ceased, but the Divine education of Israel was being steadily continued, and that susceptibility created which would enable God Himself to be incarnated in its midst. We may not be able to trace, with knowledge, the direct line of individual development

till it culminates in the Divine-human Child born in Bethlehem, but, as Dr. Schultz remarks in his *Old Testament Theology*, "the conditions that lead up to great spiritual deeds are often quite unnoticed and keep on developing, while the outer surface of a people's life appears to indicate only the quietude of exhaustion." And in the age before Christ we behold, not merely "the Pharisaism that was hostile alike to Christ and to the prophets, but also those companies of upright Israelites who found in Jesus the fulfilment of their eager longings." If there were those who had had thus created in them such a susceptibility for the Son of God when He appeared, is it unreasonable to believe that His very appearance was brought about through the development of that same susceptibility? *What else came of all the Divine working?* While we see failure on the part of man in general, and while in the rest of Humanity God's great purpose could not be directly realised, we surely cannot believe that there was also failure in that line wherein we see God Himself most manifestly carrying onward His work. It is not merely individual inheritance and development that we have to do with here (and the conflicting theories concerning these need not concern us), but *racial* and *social*, and, in the wide sense, *organic*. We may compare it to *genius*, to the way in which the peculiar genius of a nation is developed from generation to generation, and then, perhaps suddenly, appears, as it were concentrated, in some individual member of the race. We may be utterly unable to trace the line of descent of the qualities which blossom forth in such an unlooked-for and remarkable way in, it may be, some lowly-born genius,—as in a Luther,—yet we are quite sure that what appears is—although there is always something *new* into which the inheritance has blossomed—the result of development handed on by inheritance. It would be absurd to look for a Moses or a Plato in primitive, unde-

veloped man, and such geniuses only become possible through an organically handed on racial development. By this we do not mean for a moment to suggest that Jesus Christ was merely the product of His race, or merely "a religious genius." Yet He *was* this; as human, as described in human terms, He was certainly the supreme religious genius not of Israel only but of Humanity; but in Him all that was *merely* human was transcended and the Divine itself—God Himself—appeared in human form. But, we repeat, it was precisely towards this end that God had been working from the beginning, and it is only when we forget all His previous working in the world, and in Israel in particular,—when we read our New Testament as if it represented something entirely *new* and apart from the Old Testament,—that the appearance of the Son of God in the flesh becomes hard to account for. Be it well noted that it is not the appearance or actual entrance of God into our Humanity that has thus to be produced, but only the *conditions* that made such an entrance possible, in the direct line of His own steady working toward that very end.

It may seem that in the personal entrance of God into the world there is a great "leap" from that impersonal manner in which He has been hitherto present in the forms of its life; but it is not greater than that from the non-living to the living, from the irrational (in itself) to the rational, from the impersonal animal to the personal man. It is quite in analogy with all that we behold in these great epochal advances. And "the leap" is *only in appearance*. The personal Divine was all along behind the process, and God as Son was always entering more and more fully into the world. As His Spirit wrought on men, and as through its working the ethical and spiritual qualities of His Being were more and more fully developed and organised in them, a personal entrance was coming ever nearer and nearer. Personality is essentially ethical, above all, that of God.

His *personal* entrance into the world must, therefore, have depended on ethical conditions. As Dr. Illingworth remarks concerning human personality, we only say that the sensations and suggestions to which our bodily organism, or the external world, give rise are parts of our very self, when we have made them so by voluntary acceptance (*Divine Immanence*, p. 184); so, may we not say that it is only when the moral and spiritual motions of a human soul are such as God can freely and fully make His own, or identify Himself with, that God can be personally incarnated in that human person; the Divine and the human thus becoming one; the Personal element that was always behind the evolutionary process thus realising Itself in the Creation. Already in the Old Testament, in the way in which the Prophet can identify himself with God and speak in His name, and in the identification of the believer's interest with that of his God, we see some approach towards the Incarnation of God in man; and the later dates that Criticism is leading us to give to some of the Old Testament writings is helping us better to realise the gradual advance towards the Divine manifestation, not merely in the teaching, but in the Person and life of Christ.

### *The Sinlessness of Christ*

What was most essential for the organism in which the Son of God should appear, was that in it "*the Spirit*" should from the first transcend "*the flesh*" and be the principle of the life. In this such a union with the Divine Spirit was reached as enabled God to become actually in His proper life and in His "person" as Son incarnated. This entire predominance of the Spirit over the flesh constituted the "sinlessness" of Christ in the only sense in which sinlessness can be attributed to an organism or to an unconscious child. The real sinlessness of Christ was that achieved by

the free, personal action of His spirit in harmony with, and in obedience to, the Spirit of the Father within Him. No doubt there is inherited evil: human nature as a whole is tainted by sin. But there is also inherited good; the spiritual becomes organised in the material, and whenever the spiritual becomes the *predominant* element, the required condition is reached. Sin, Paul teaches, becomes actual in men through the weakness of the Spirit in presence of the strength of the flesh, and, where the Spirit has become the dominant principle, the possibility exists of the complete vanquishment of the flesh and of the perfect life of Divine Sonship and Holiness. We have no means of knowing with certainty what was the actual condition of "the flesh," as affected by inheritance, in Christ. For the achievement of the perfect life of the Spirit it was not necessary that it should be absolutely free from all inherited tendency; and to have saved Him by a miracle of Divine interposition from what was common to the Humanity He came to redeem, would have been to take away from the glory of His moral achievement, and it is contradicted by the assertion that He was "made in all points like unto His brethren," yet "without sin," which means personal sin—the only real *sin*, in fact. There is no such thing as impersonal or inherited *sin*. No more is it necessary, on the other hand, that, as Irving maintained, it should be actually sinful flesh (in any sense beyond that in which "the flesh" is inherently the source of sin), in which He should appear in order to be our Redeemer. We might think, indeed, that, since Christ can now by His Spirit save *us* from sin, however corrupt we may have become, that same Spirit had to contend in Him not only with the flesh in its natural bent, but with inherited sinfulness. But "the flesh" or lower animal nature is, as Paul teaches, in itself the source of sin. Wherever it exists and in whatever condition, it implies, as the natural self-seeking, self-preserving,

earthly principle, the possibility of sin. As respects *its principle*, it is the same in all, and Jesus only needed to take "the flesh" common to man in order to have our whole battle to fight and to gain the victory for Himself and for us all. Certainly the impression which the Gospels give us of Jesus is not that of one struggling with an evil nature,—but simply with "the flesh" as such; and although what is aimed at is perhaps correct enough, it is surely misleading to speak of our Lord as "becoming man under the bondage of his nature or flesh," as Du Bose does in his *Soteriology of the New Testament* (p. 227). The Spirit was, from the first, supreme, so that there never was or could be such bondage in His case. What He had to do was to maintain all throughout His life the supremacy of the Spirit over the flesh, and to complete it by His death, so that man wholly after the Spirit, although *in the flesh*, might become a realised fact and universal potency. A sinless *nature* in "the flesh" is an impossible thing: what is possible is the predominance of the Spirit over the flesh, and *it was just in the production of this that all the previous working of God in nature and in grace reached its goal*, and the Son of God, and no mere Son of man, was born in the womb of the Virgin of Israel. To have produced this sinlessness through an abrupt miracle or in a newly-created Being, would have been (supposing it otherwise possible) equivalent to abandoning the old Humanity and beginning afresh by a Divine act of power. It was Humanity that God had been working to redeem, not a brand new thing He was creating; it was an *ethical*, not a merely physical work He was working; and when the goal of the predominance of the Spirit over the flesh was reached in the line of the Divine Spirit's working, in that very fact the Son of God entered the world, being, as Paul said, "of the seed of David according to the flesh," but "the Son of God according to the Spirit of Holiness." The spiritual element in

the world (like the "matter" and "force") is *one*; it is the Divine element in its highest and most essential truth; it is, in short, God in man. Through it God had always been entering more and more fully into our Humanity, and as soon as this spiritual element can become the dominant one, we have a child born into the world in whom creation rises to a new stage, even *the spiritual* as distinguished from the merely natural, and from the partly natural and partly spiritual. In this *new*, true man, yet arising out of the working of God on the old Humanity, the Son of God Himself appears and will be yet completely incarnate on the earth. In Him God will be revealed,—the Father manifested in the Son; in Him Humanity will be redeemed from "the flesh," and He will be for ever the centre of a new spiritual and eternal life to men. Creation has in Him entered on a new stage of its life. If we believe that it is *God* who is working in the world, and that He was specially working in Israel towards the realisation of His image in man, surely all the powers of Nature must have been subservient to this supreme purpose, and it ought not to be difficult to conceive how, as the outcome of all this working, an organism should have been produced expressive of the highest result aimed at, and with such susceptibility to the Holy Spirit's influences that, in the Person of whom it is the initial expression, the life of Divine Sonship shall be realised and manifested in human form. Why should we forget all this previous working of God in the world, and go away to seek by a *Kenosis* in time, or an abrupt irruption into the order of Nature, for that which God had been all along working out? Above all, why should we seek to account solely by a physical act for that which must be an ethical fact, instead of seeing it to be the result of an ethical process,—God's great work, indeed, in the world. While we maintain "the Supernatural," let us not forget that the Supernatural is the *Divine*.

## SUMMARY

We may sum up the matter thus. Everything proceeds from the Divine Reason and Love, which contains within itself both Fatherhood and Sonship. Creation is the Divine Fatherhood going forth to realise the Divine Sonship in finite forms in the world. The Divine Reason, which must first condition itself in the forms and forces of physical nature, in due time—when the necessary conditions exist—manifests itself as Life and works on as Life under the necessary laws of Life. When the development of an organism allows it, it appears as Reason in man, gradually working itself more and more fully into his life, shining in him as Love also, and seeking as Love to find full personal entrance into him. This is the Holy Spirit in the ethical sense seeking to raise man to a higher spiritual and eternal life. And just as the Reason in Nature wrought itself into animal life till rational man appeared—the first Adam; so, for the appearance of the second Adam—man wholly after the Spirit—the Holy Spirit was working itself into human life. At length the goal is reached, and man wholly after the Spirit is born into the world. God as Son can be fully incarnated in that man; God through the Holy Spirit can enter and be personally and truly expressed in human form. The Divine Reason and Love have in Him, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, realised themselves; the Divine wholly possess the human and the human the Divine ("I am in the Father, and the Father in Me"), and the man knows himself as the Son of God. This is at the same time *God* as He has gone out from Himself to realise His life in the world, and as He does realise it in human form. It is not something that Humanity produces, but something it becomes gradually susceptible of and *finds* imparted as the susceptibility rises. It is something ethical,

and can only impart itself where the ethical susceptibility exists. If, as the story of evolution suggests, life ascends to higher and higher forms through the experience of "a want" in relation to its ever-increasing environment—which becomes also *Spiritual* and *Divine* in the case of man—then, when this want becomes purely *God* and thus the life-principle of the being, God can impart Himself wholly thereto and become fully incarnate, and when the full Divine-human consciousness is reached, the eternal Sonship in God is realised and present in human form.

The Old Testament is the record not only of the preparation for this incarnation, but of *the progress of the process*, in that line in which it was to culminate. There is thus a sense in which we may see, first in the developing creation, then in Humanity at large, then in that special line exhibited in the Old Testament, the growth of the Son of God *in time*, and, as the product of the whole working of the Father in the world, just as clearly as we may behold the growth of an organic being from its immanent principle into its full development. "I am the true Vine," said Jesus. "My Father Himself has been, and is, the Husbandman. It was over His own Son that He was watching" (Maurice, *The Gospel of John*, p. 385). In this light the Old Testament persons—"patriarchs and lawgivers, prophets, heroes, and kings—"are not only "types," but *prophetic types* of Christ, and stages in the progress of the Incarnation of God in Him.

## II

*The Gradual Incarnation in the Person of Christ*

There was in the appearance of Christ such an immense advance on all that had gone before as marks a new creational epoch. There is a new entrance of the Divine

into the finite forms of the world's life, nay, its highest possible entrance, even in personal form. So that, while it is the result of a long ethical process (expressing and maintaining itself, however, also physically), and not the consequence of an abrupt and unrelated physical miracle (whatever place the physical held in relation to the birth of Christ), it was at the same time, in the truest sense, the work of God's creative agency in the world. It was "miraculous," in the same sense as that in which we can speak of all creative action, especially as it reveals itself in great epochs, as "miraculous"; and it was an entrance from without in the same sense as that in which the Divine had been all along increasingly entering the forms of the world's life. As such it was the real entrance of God as He had, in the person of "the Son," gone out into the process of creation; the real entrance of God as Son, in Divine-human personal form, into the world; so that we have in Jesus Christ not only a human person, but *a human person in whom a Divine person was incarnate*, and Christ, on the Divine side, had a personal pre-existence in God before the world was.

But, of course, it was not in the mere organism that the Son of God was completely incarnated. While the whole "promise and potency" of the new spiritual and Divine manhood was there, the full ethical life of God as Son could not be there expressed; the Incarnation was by no means complete in the emergence of the organism or birth of the little child into the world. Even in the individual Christ, the Incarnation was carried to its consummation through the Holy (ethical) Spirit. The Spirit or principle and power of the whole future development was there from the beginning, but it had to realise itself in a Divine-human life. Jesus Christ was genuinely man, and as man He had to realise His manhood, through constant receptiveness of and obedience to the Spirit, which was the Divine principle

within Him. While at no moment of His life was He other than a true, Divine-human person, the complete realisation and development of the Divine life in unison with, or through, His Humanity, was necessarily *progressive*. "Though He was a Son," "yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered"; He was "made perfect through suffering." While the consciousness of Sonship—the ethical substance of His Being—was present from the first possibility of its shining into the human consciousness, the life of Christ followed the normal course of development and stood within the limits of Humanity. It would not have been *human* otherwise. The gospel pages do not show us the course of its development; it is the record of the closing years alone almost that they give us. But it was during the unrecorded thirty years that the foundations were securely laid in God of the life that afterwards appears so strong and unbroken in its unity with the Spirit. In estimating the person and work of Christ, we must never forget these thirty unrecorded years,—though they mostly *are* forgotten. But we know that He grew "in wisdom" as well as "in stature" and "in favour with God and man." We know that, even after He came forth to enter on His specific mission, He was proved by temptation, and that, throughout His whole life, He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." He stood in that same "flesh" which we all possess, and which is in us "flesh of sin," although it never became such in Him. His whole course was one of unbroken subjection of the flesh to the Spirit. In that flesh He had a will of His own, which *might* have refused the will of the Father. His victory was through the constant acceptance of the Father's will, through the Spirit within Him. It was thus that the Divine and the human were continuously one, and the Divine life more and more completely filling the human and making it its own. Trial and temptation were real to Him,—within the limitations

of the flesh. He did not know *everything*, else He could no more have been tempted than God can be tempted. All throughout "He grew in wisdom" as He advanced in years He "learned" by experience,—by the things which He saw and "which He suffered." He lived and wrought, as He told His disciples, *by faith* in God His Father, and His constant practice of prayer showed His entire dependence on "the Father." While the essential ethical life of God filled His person more and more, and while He possessed, organically, a nature capable of expressing in a unique degree the presence and power of God, as we see it manifested in His marvellous wisdom and wonderful works, He did not evince a knowledge or wisdom such as would not have been human, or gained according to the laws of human development; and even His works are, perhaps, to be regarded as such as belong to *man*, when he stands in the same perfection as He stood in. It was as "the Son of man" that He did them, "in the power of the Spirit." It must ever be remembered that, when the Divine consciousness becomes embodied in human form, it can only have *in that form* such consciousness as the nature of the form permits of. So that it is no contradiction to His essential Deity, if it should appear that He simply shared on certain subjects the knowledge of His time and place, although certainly He seems in most respects to have risen above it. The essential thing in Him was His Sonship and His life as Son of God: *this* was raised above all limitations, and was truly eternal and Divine. The question has recently been asked, Could Jesus err? and the answer has been given that, if He could, we cannot place full confidence in Him as Son of God and Saviour. But, while the instances of error alleged are for the most part trivial and inconclusive, the primary question is, surely, *Error in respect to what?* Christ was no magnified Admirable Crichton to give men information on all manner of subjects. He had a definite mission from

the Father, to be the representative of God and of man in the world, and in all that pertained to the ethical and spiritual life and to His mission as Founder of the Kingdom of God, there was no error or shortcoming, and there could have been none consistently with the fulfilment of His mission and the truth of His Person as Son of God. But even on one subject, connected with the outward aspects of His mission, He tells us plainly Himself that He was without knowledge. No man or angel or even "*the Son*" knew "the day and hour" of the final *parousia*. If on this subject He had not knowledge, may there not have been others lying, as Dr. Dale has expressed it, "outside those high and Divine regions which for Him were illuminated by the light of the Holy Ghost and the consciousness of His unique relations to the Father," in which He "accepted the general traditions of His people," as, indeed, He must have done in many respects in order to have been able to live a truly human life at all.<sup>1</sup> The Divine life was in Him in *human* form. He therefore learned as others around Him learned, accepting the common tradition of the sources of His knowledge,—a matter in itself, from the spiritual point of view, of perfect indifference. Indeed, He teaches us a much-needed lesson here; for what matters it *who* wrote this or that Book of the Bible, so long as it contains truth inspired by the Spirit of God? The great soul of Jesus was high above all those questions of *petty* criticism, and He would never dream that, because *He* had said so and so, accepting the popular speech of His day, men would say that such matters were settled for ever. It is neither criticism nor science nor philosophy, but practical truth of life that we are to look for from Him; while yet in His teaching, in its ethical and spiritual sphere,—being divinely true,—we shall find the deepest and truest philosophy; above all, we shall find it in His life. He studied the Scriptures

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Dale's *Christian Doctrine*, pp. 286–292.

and spoke of God as He found Him represented therein—in terms of the God-taught Hebrew faith in its highest forms, heightened and “fulfilled” out of that consciousness of Sonship which was the very essence of His life. It was, perhaps, even in the Messianic *form* that He held His essential Sonship. He appeared as the Messiah of Israel,—an office which had only a relative value, although it was lifted by Him out of all national and materialistic limitations into an ethical and spiritual, and hence, ultimately, *universal* reference. But, according to the testimony of the Gospels, He drew His knowledge of His work in the world as the Messiah, from the Hebrew Scriptures, from the teaching of the Spirit within, and from actual experience of the needs of men. He saw and pictured the future in forms familiar to those around Him and derived from the Messianic expectations of His time—facts which need ever to be kept in mind in our construction of Eschatological systems. Had He been different, we repeat, He would not have been *man* at all.

But at the root of that truly human life, rising up into it and ramifying in all directions, was the life of God as, in His person of “Son,” He had entered the world, and as He stood in transcendent relation to this Divine-human Person and moved by His Spirit within Him. We feel that underneath (or above) all that we *see* in Christ there is something unrevealed, a hidden greatness, a deeper knowledge, a *Divine* life. He felt Himself “straitened” under the limits of the flesh, and looked forward to that final baptism of suffering that should set His Spirit free. As already said, it was in Gethsemane that the final moral conquest of the flesh by the Spirit was made, and it was in the great sacrifice of the Cross, in that which was the darkest hour for the flesh, in that act of utter and absolute obedience of the man to the God within, that the flesh was finally and for ever subdued, “triumphed over openly” by

the Spirit and the man made wholly and for ever one with God. *That* was the complete Incarnation and full realisation of the Infinite, Ethical, Divine Life of Love in man. And God as Son, at once human and Divine, having thus completely realised our life *in* the flesh but *after* the Spirit, in that Humanity which He had made His own, returned to the Father, to come again from the Father as the Spirit and Power of that true life of man—that life of Divine Sonship in human form—which He had realised in His own Person. It was in the Love that moved to that great sacrifice that the Son in God (if we may so speak) fully realised and manifested His Divine life, although still in human form; for only in that form could He *die* on the Cross. It was a repetition of that great Divine act of self-giving in which the creation itself is founded. And, just as God as Son, in obedience to the Divine principle of life in Himself, gave Himself at first to be the immanent principle of the world's life, reaching its goal in Him who appeared as the Divine-human Head of Humanity, so now does He, in that same Sonship in human form, give Himself to redeem the world from sin and to be the principle and power of the higher life of all men as sons and heirs of God. Through the sacrifice of the Cross Christ gives Himself, not only *for* us, but *unto* us as the indwelling and efficient Spirit of our life in union with the Father, and is present with us as the transcendent Divine-human Lord and Author of Grace to His Brethren.

His *Resurrection* followed, of necessity, because the life of the Eternal Spirit had completely realised itself in Him, and had become the principle and power of a new and full Divine-human life in the Spirit. We say “followed,” but although for the sake of His disciples' faith He may have manifested Himself to them in bodily form, His resurrection was really His return to the Father, as it is represented

in His own teaching in the Fourth Gospel. It is possible that we find ourselves confronted here by the same kind of doubt as we have seen meets us at the beginning of His life, namely, whether the Spirit operated on the material of the dead body of the Saviour so as directly to reanimate it (at the same time spiritualizing it), or whether His resurrection was purely spiritual. The doubt arises from the same reason too—from *the form of the records*. This again should be an open question; for the real Resurrection was the return of Christ to God, and must have taken place the moment that His Spirit breathed itself out on the Cross and left the limiting form of the fleshly body behind it. We cannot conceive that Christ, the Son of God, could ever be, in His spiritual personality, laid *in the tomb*, nor could the restoration of His personality be dependent on the reanimation of His *body*. This would land us in Materialism, and would take away our hope. For His body never “saw corruption,” while our bodies are sure to do so. Yet His Resurrection was not merely the survival of the soul and His passing, like other men, into a disembodied life, but was as *unique*, as His life had been—the result of the full possession of the human by the Divine—a complete triumph over Death in every sense, and a passing into the fulness of life in God. He was thereafter man in a new Divine and eternal life, God as Son and yet man as God had realised His life in the form of Divine-human Sonship—God in man and man in God—in whom God is present in His fullest manifestation with and in us all, able to make all men partakers in the same Divine and eternal life. The full truth of the Incarnation is that God has in Christ realised His life of Sonship in human form (which was *our* life in its truth), which, divested of the flesh, He retains for ever, and in this we see the possibility and behold the Image of our own eternal life in God. It was the one God and Father who was in Christ by His Holy Spirit as He is in us all, but He

was also in Him *organically* as the result of the whole Divine working in the world to that end, and so completely possessing Him that the human was entirely *one* with the Divine. And from that Divine-human Christ the Spirit comes that can make us all partakers in the same Eternal Life in God.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND OF CHRIST IN ITS PRESENT RELATION TO US—RELATION OF CHRIST TO GOD AND TO US IN GOD—THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY AND UNITY—SUMMARY OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT—THE CHURCH AS ITS BODY

WE are now able to get a complete answer to the question, Why should Christ speak as He did concerning the direct relation of each man to God, while yet it is only through Himself that we can find God as we need to find Him? We have also been led to a conception of the Person of Christ which shows us how He could be truly man, and yet God in human form, and to a view of the Incarnation in the light of which it is seen to be at once truly natural and supernatural—the outcome of a Divine process in the world—and the actual, personal Incarnation of God in man. We are able also now to gain a completer apprehension of the truth concerning the Holy Spirit as the great thing in Christianity, in its relation to God and to Christ, and as the abiding personal presence and power of both.

The solution of the difficulty with which we started is found in the need there was for the Holy Spirit as it comes to us in and through Christ. (1) While God as the infinite, transcendent, all-containing Spirit is with us everywhere, it is *as Spirit* that He is so with us. He “must be worshipped in Spirit and in truth”—through His own Spirit in us—in that Spirit which He truly is. This necessitates the *revelation* of God in His truth. But it is only progressively that

this revelation can be given, and that the true Spirit of worship and of Sonship can enter our Humanity ; and it was through the Incarnation and revelation of God in Christ that the Spirit came in the fulness of the power necessary to raise men to their true and full life as the sons of God, and in the grace that can sustain and perfect them therein. Till the Spirit so entered our Humanity, it was not possible for men to find the Father in His truth, or to become the sons of God in the full reality of their sonship.

And (2) God is *holy* Spirit : Sonship towards Himself is essentially *ethical* in its nature. Christ called men to become the sons of their Father in Heaven by becoming like Him in their spirit and conduct. This Sonship was not physical, but ethical ; and although it belonged *ideally* to man as man, men in general had not yet risen into this life of Sonship in the fulness of its truth,—only Christ their Head. In Him the Spirit had wholly transcended the flesh, but in Humanity at large the flesh was predominant, and in even the best of men it had an influence such as it did not have in Christ. Therefore they did not stand in the same relation to God as He did. They were not sons like Him. Nay, *sin* separated men from God and made fellowship with Him as His accepted sons and heirs impossible. Sin, therefore, must be removed as standing between man and God, and men must be born anew of the Spirit before they could be, in the highest ethical sense, the sons of their Heavenly Father. He is a true Father with all a Father's yearning love, but they are not yet true sons. The fatherly relation on God's part implies the filial relation on man's part, and it was *this* that was realised in its fulness in Christ, and that is, through the Spirit of Christ, to be realised in us all. The case is analogous to His *moral teaching*. This is the highest, truest, purest, most beautiful and attractive teaching of Righteousness that can be set before us. Every conscience responds to it as Duty ; every true heart discerns

in it the Ideal of Life. But can we straightway realise it? On the contrary, like the Law, the complete spiritual expression of which it is, it only reveals our sin and weakness; it shows us our need of Redemption, and it is only through the *Spirit* of Christ within us, as it comes to us through His Person as revealing the Father, and through His work as our Redeemer, that His ethical teaching can be realised by us. It is the same with His teaching concerning the Divine Fatherhood and man's sonship. Sonship is the *Ideal*, but it can only become actual through "the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Christ is thus He in whom the true life of man as a Son of God is manifested, and in whom, therefore, God the Father of men is supremely revealed in human form; in Him also that perfect Righteousness is realised which alone can make man a partaker of eternal life, and man's sin is so confessed and put away that God can accept men, as yet sinful in themselves, as His sons and heirs. From Him, regarded in His entire person and work, and as representing both God and man, the Spirit proceeds that can draw men to God and raise them to the true life of the sons of God; and from Him in His continued life and spiritual presence with us comes, in the same Spirit, the grace that can sustain and perfect us in that life; that can enable us to do the works of God; that can establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and make us, individually, partakers in that eternal life of Sonship to make us sharers in which was the gracious purpose of our God and Father in both Creation and Redemption. Christ can be all this unto us because the Spirit He thus brings us is *the essential Spirit of that life of Sonship in the Ideal of which we are created*. It is "the Son" in God who is the Ideal and principle of the creation; the consummation of God's purpose can only be the realisation of that Sonship in man; the Sonship in God is therefore always the potency of the Divine life in

man ; and in Christ we have that Sonship incarnate, actually realising itself in human form, and coming through the Spirit of Christ to realise itself in us all.

THE PRESENT RELATION OF CHRIST TO GOD AND  
TO US IN GOD

When God as Son had realised His Divine life of Sonship in human form in Christ,—not as a Theophany, but actually becoming man through the whole working of the Spirit in Humanity, and through that unity of the human with the Divine which was realised in Christ,—“the Son” was *in* God, not merely now in Divine form, but also in that human form in which the eternal Sonship in God had been all along seeking to express itself. God as Son had gone out from Himself as Father in order to spread abroad the Divine life in finite forms, and had attained His end in Humanity in Jesus Christ, who was thus, even as human, wholly one with the Divine. In Christ “the Son” returned to “the Father,” not as a separate person in the individual or numerical sense, but yet with a human personality carried up into the Divine life ; and as both Divine and human He is ever with us and God in Him, immanent in our humanity. He “came forth from the Father and came into the world,” in obedience to that Divine Love which is the very Life of God ; and, having realised the Divine purpose in the world, He, as He said, again “left the world and returned to the Father.” He returned, not only as a Divine, but as a Divine-human Person. As the Divine Son in human form, He carried the Humanity of which He is the Head into that life in God which is the goal of our human existence, and into that “glory” which “He had with the Father before the world was.” Christ as one undivided Divine-human person is now *in God* in a manner transcending our present powers of thought, but which is

none the less representative of the eternal life in store for us all—"The glory which Thou has given Me I have given them." But far from thereby severing His connection with us in this world, He was able thus to come into far more intimate relations to us. As we read in the Epistle to the Ephesians (iv. 9), "He ascended far above all the Heavens, that He might fill all things." He is no longer, indeed, in the world of Time and Sense; He is no longer in any sensuous or physical contact with us; but in that Holy Spirit which proceeds from His life and work, and which *is* His own essential life, and in His spiritual, personal presence, He is verily with us, present to our spirits and influential within us, working in and with us, according to spiritual laws and methods of working.<sup>1</sup> We can thus come into blessed and fruitful communion and fellowship with Himself and with God as our Father in and through that Spirit which is at once the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, of God and of Christ. For in our inmost being we are spirit also. "Two worlds are ours," and we can rise above the material and temporal to the Spiritual, the Eternal, the Divine. This is what He taught His disciples when, according to the Fourth Gospel, He set before them the necessity for His departure in the flesh, and told them of the Paraclete that should come to be for ever with them, in whom they should have fellowship with the Father and with Himself, the Spirit in whom He should be "with them for ever," in whom both the Father and the Son would "come and make their abode with them." It was the full revelation of a spiritual, "interior" Divine and eternal life,

<sup>1</sup> "He ceased to be known as the outward Master and Friend of a few personal followers, or the occasional visitant of a few earthly homes, that He might become the indwelling life of all believing souls, a presence not intermittent but constant, transfused through their inmost being in all regions of space, in all ages of time. It is this which constitutes the fundamental idea of the Kingdom of the Spirit"—Principal Caird, *The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, ii. p. 238.

far more real than the life of the senses, one which only seems unreal to us because we have so little faith and live so little in it. And that Paraclete, or the Holy Spirit in the Christian sense, was none other than that Spirit through which God had been always present in the world, which had found in the Divine Humanity of Christ a complete personal organ of manifestation and expression, such as could meet and answer the sense of personality in ourselves and the craving for personal communion.

#### THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY AND UNITY

We are thus led on to the Christian Trinity as being not a speculative truth merely, but a *practical* truth, necessary for our complete conception of God as He has revealed Himself in Christ, and for our full participation in His Redemption. The simple œconomical Trinity of the New Testament necessarily rises into or carries us back to an ontological Trinity of distinctions in the Divine nature, though not of "persons" in the modern sense of the word as applied to separate individuals, which would be Tritheism. Only thus can we relate Christ to God as our Christian faith requires us to do; only thus can we understand how He can be "the Lord" who administers the Spirit; only thus can we see in Him *God* personally incarnate and not merely a man inspired by God or in whom God is *sympathetically* present. Nay, only thus can we truly think of God as the facts of Christianity and of our Christian life require us to think of Him; and only thus can we engage in Christian prayer and worship. Christian worship is offered to God as *Father*, in the Spirit, and through Christ. Christ, in so far as His Spirit dwells in us, places us in His own relation of Sonship towards the Father. This is prayer "in His name"—"I in them and Thou in Me." Merely to pray to the Father while we

ignore the Son, at once Divine and human, and all that God becomes to us in Him, is not to worship God as He has made Himself known to us. It is *in the Son* that the Father is revealed ; it is in the Son that the Father has come to our help and salvation ; it is in the Son that He brings us nigh to Himself ; it is in the Son that He has given us Himself and His Holy Spirit in the fullest measure and most influential form ; it is through faith in, and that union with, the Son, which our faith brings us into, that we find access to the Father and the Spirit and power of our Christian life. Therefore the Christian heart rises also to Christ, and the Christian man lives in fellowship not only with the Father, but with the Divine-human Son Jesus Christ ; "calls on His name as Lord," seeks His guidance and help, and trusts in His power and grace as the ever-living Saviour who enables us to fulfil our true life and service towards our God and Father. "To us (Christians)," as Paul said, "there is one God, the Father, *of whom* are all things ; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through whom* are all things." But in order so to look to Christ, we must see Him to be Divine as well as human : hence the importance of the Christian doctrine of a Trinity in God, such as enables us to see God immanent as well as transcendent, Son as well as Father, dwelling in His infinite perfection, while also realising Himself in our humanity, truly incarnate in Christ. The same follows, obviously, from our relation to the Holy Spirit as that in which God and Christ are immediately present with us. That Holy Spirit must be seen to belong to and to flow from the Divine life itself ; and as it is the Spirit of both God and Christ, we see here again the need of recognising the real Deity of both.

The original Trinity of the New Testament was indeed simply that which has been distinguished as the Trinity of Revelation or the economical Trinity of God as Father, revealed in Jesus Christ His Son, and present in His Holy

Spirit. As long as Jewish modes of thought which made it possible to associate the Messiah with God, were in the ascendant, this simple, practical Trinity was sufficient; but it was impossible for thought to rest in the association of a merely human person with God, and therefore, as Jewish modes of thinking receded and errors had to be combated, thought was carried of necessity on to the ontological Trinity. That doctrine may never have found complete or satisfactory expression in any of the many forms in which it has been stated; some modes of statement may be so repellent as to drive those to whom they are presented into complete rejection of it; to many it may seem either to run up into Tritheism, or out into Sabellianism. Yet none the less does this doctrine, however imperfectly expressed or sometimes even wrongly conceived, contain a most important truth, in so far as it points to real ethical distinctions in the Divine nature. It is only by holding fast to these that we can see God (and not merely the power or influence of God) personally incarnate in Christ, and as an abiding Presence with us in Him. While these distinctions are not to be pressed into anthropomorphic or Tritheistic representations, they imply more than the Sabellian idea of a threefold historical manifestation of the one God, or a *merely* ideal distinction in the Divine nature. The Sabellian Trinity (sometimes called also the "Modalistic") is a Trinity of modes of *manifestation* only, not belonging essentially to the Divine *existence*, and it is always in danger of losing the personal, living, and abiding Christ, because it fails to recognise His essential ground in the Divine nature.

We have already seen that, in order to explain the essential oneness of Christ with God implied in His relation to us and in the consciousness of Sonship manifested in His earthly life, with all that flowed therefrom, we are carried back to an Eternal Sonship in God, not,

however, in a human, but in that *Divine* sense or mode which is the prototype of the human. It is that element in the *personal* God which is the Ideal and the potency of the Creation. It is that Eternal Sonship which is the necessary co-relative of the Eternal Fatherhood, that Sonship in Divine form which God seeks to reproduce and realise in finite forms in the Creation. It is God as He exists to and for Himself, and goes out from Himself in free response and obedience to His own Divine nature,—that which alone constitutes Him the Ideal of our human life, or gives us a *Divine* Ideal for our life of Sonship ; that which alone, indeed, can enable us to think of God as that *ethical* Being He must be to be God. This, as we have seen, gives us the second member of an ontological Trinity, as real and personal, and yet not a separate person from God, but a “person” *in* God.

The *Holy Spirit* again goes forth *from* God ; but that Spirit is first of all *in* God, the very deepest principle and life of both the Fatherhood and the Sonship. From the Father through the Son, it goes forth into the Creation, becoming increasingly immanent both in Nature and in man ; and again, through the Son incarnate, it passes in full measure into the world of men as the power of Redemption and of the Divine life of Sonship. That Spirit was eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son ; but to think of it as a *separate* person from the Father and the Son in anything like our sense of the word “person,” would be to fall into Tritheism in one of its worst forms. The Spirit has its personality *in* the Father and *in* the Son, “*proceeding*” as a Spirit from both, and bringing to us the personal presence of both. To *us* it comes in its fulness from the Father through the Son incarnate, and therefore in it we receive that which is Divine and eternal, and that which unites us directly to God. It is in the Holy Spirit that we realise the *unity* of the Father and the Son, and find with

us in our life the one God who *is* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not only as our Father, but as He has expressed His life as Son in Jesus Christ. But when we think of that Spirit as a *separate Person* from both God and Christ,—as a “person” in the human instead of in the Divine sense,—we get into serious difficulty. God Himself we know is Spirit, and it is impossible to think that there can be *the Spirit of a Spirit as a separate Person from that Spirit*. Besides, the Christian consciousness knows God, the author of life and salvation, and it knows Christ who brings salvation unto it; but to commit its interests or send forth its affections to a new and different Person called the Holy Spirit is something confusing in the extreme, against which the instinct and the love that cling to God and to Christ rebel, and it can only be *forcibly* reached. To see, however, that the Holy Spirit is *the very Spirit of the personal God and of the personal Christ*—that in the Holy Spirit God is with us as He has realised His life in our Humanity in Christ—is to be enabled to understand how it is possible for God to do all things, as the apostle says, and yet to do all *through* Christ, and also how, *in* that Spirit we have God both in His ethical truth and in that Divine human personal form which is for us His highest manifestation.

*The Christian Trinity*, therefore, in complete harmony with the Divine Unity and free from all that is Tritheistic, may be briefly stated thus. *The Father* is God as the Source of all that is or can be: *the Son* is God as He exists to and for Himself, as He goes out from Himself in obedience to His nature of Perfect Love into the world, to create and spread abroad the Divine Life and Blessedness as this Sonship realised in finite beings; and as He realises that Sonship in human form, and returns to Himself in the Divine-human Christ: *the Holy Spirit* is God in His innermost being or essence, the principle of the life of both Father and Son; that in which God, both as

Father and as Son, does everything, and in which He comes to us and is in us increasingly through His manifestations. Through the working and indwelling of this Holy Spirit, God in His "person" of "Son" was fully incarnate in Christ, and Christ remains the personal organ of that Holy Spirit in Divine-human form, for our Redemption and perfecting in the eternal life of the sons of God. In one word, it is God *as* Father, *as* Son, and *as* Holy Spirit; and this one God is for ever with us to our help and salvation and full Sonship in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at once completely human and wholly Divine.

#### OUR RELATION TO GOD AND TO CHRIST

It may be asked, If God, even apart from the historically manifested Christ, visits all men in the Holy Spirit, what is the difference between this and His coming to us in Christ? We answer that in the Holy Spirit, in the Christian sense, the presence of the living, spiritual Christ is included, and its distinctive mark is *redemptive and perfecting*. It is thus *more* than the Spirit as it comes, or is in us, apart from Christ; it is that fuller measure of it that we need for our Redemption from the flesh and for our true life as sons of God. It is God as He has realised His life in human form in Jesus Christ,—and it is Christ in whom that Divine life has been so realised,—not only Divine, but Divine and human, perfectly Divine and perfectly human. It is not more God than Christ, nor Christ than God, but contains the actual personal presence of both God and Christ, and of both the Father and the Son in God. It is the Spirit of the personal God; but we have also in it the personal presence of Christ and of God in Him in Divine-human form. While we live our religious life in direct relation to God as Father, God is in Himself Son as well as Father. There is in God an aspect or mode of the

Divine existence, or “person” in the theological sense, in virtue of which God becomes the life of the world, realises His life in Divine-human form, and comes in the Holy Spirit to realise that same life of Sonship in us all. This Holy Spirit is moving in us all “by nature,” and is indeed the deepest principle of our life,—God immanent in us; but it comes to us in and through Christ in the needed fulness and power to redeem and deliver us from sin and to complete our Sonship. It is through this Spirit of Sonship in our hearts that we become truly the sons of God. It is ever the Sonship in God that is realising itself in man, and it is through our union with Christ, the perfect Divine-human Son, in His reconciliation of Humanity with God and through His life living in us, that we stand in our right relation to God as Father, and are enabled to live our life of Sonship before Him. Hence our faith must immediately grasp *Christ* and cleave to Christ, and it is through the Holy Spirit as it comes to us in and through Christ, including the personal presence of the indwelling Christ, that God realises in us that Divine life of Sonship which He realised in Christ. We repeat that our relation is directly with God as our Father, but it is through the indwelling of the Son in the Spirit, which is indeed the relation of the Divine life to itself as in Father and Son.

And here we see the high and lasting significance of the *Headship* of Christ. This Headship, always ideally true of “the Son” in relation to Humanity, has become actual, realised fact in Jesus Christ, in whom God has not only united Himself with our Humanity, but has taken it into Himself, redeemed, glorified, and made for ever one with Himself. This is what has come to our Humanity through the Incarnation: in Christ it is one with God; and this is the Destiny of every man in and through Christ. The ancient Fathers were not afraid to say that God

became man in order to "deify" Humanity. The solid ground they had for this appears in the truth that the Sonship in God is the Ideal of the Creation. This Destiny was actually realised for man in Christ, and in His Divine Humanity there resides the power that can make it actual in the case of all men. He is that Vine, deeply rooted in God, of which we all, whether we believe it or not, are (in ideal truth at least) branches, and, through this Divine Humanity, the Spirit and power of the true life of the sons of God flows forth to all, although it may be only *some* who in this present time realise for themselves this Divine union, and become *fruitful* branches of Christ and sons of God in truth. "Now that the Logos (or Son) has taken to Himself our nature, our nature possesses Him. He belongs to us, who constitute the body of which He is the Head."<sup>1</sup>

This lasting significance of the Incarnation and of the Divine Humanity in Christ has received too little attention in modern theology, and consequently the Incarnation is too much discussed as a thing of the past merely. It was very different in the early Church; and the subject was treated with great Christian boldness and richness by Athanasius and others. Take the following passages from Athanasius, quoted by Dorner:—

"In becoming a man Himself," says Athanasius repeatedly, "the Eternal Son constituted mankind sons and gods; for He set forth in Himself, in the first instance, a man who was God, and now He draws us into fellowship with Him." "He first sanctified Himself in order that He might sanctify us all—He gives as God; He receives as man; but in His person *we* have made a beginning of receiving. From Him streams forth the Spirit as a precious

<sup>1</sup> Dorner's 'Statement of View of Athanasius,' *Person of Christ*, ii. 253.

ointment over the whole of Humanity." "He wrapped Himself in our first-fruits, and married Himself therewith. Taking this perishing man into Himself, He renews him by a stable renewal unto eternal duration."—"The Father designates those sons in whom He sees His Son."—"Man united with a mere creature could not have been deified; nor could he have ventured to present himself to the Father, had not Christ been the essential Word of God. As man He is become the beginning of the new creation; for He is the man created for us. For this reason, this union of the Divine and human took place in Him in order that, with that which is by nature Divine, He might unite that which is by nature human, and the salvation and deification of the human might be firmly established."<sup>1</sup>

#### SUMMARY OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT

The Spirit, as that in which God and Christ are with us and operative within us, is thus the most important thing in Christianity. The Spirit of God has always been the Divine presence and power working in the world, that by which God is "immanent in Nature and in man," and through the Incarnation and work of Christ that Spirit comes to us in its highest form of manifestation with redemptive and perfecting power. It is in that Spirit, through His "person" of Son, that God goes forth creating; and from the Divine manifestation in the creation, the Spirit, in countless forms, proceeds, influencing man and continuing in him the creative work. It shines forth as the Reason that has expressed itself in the rationally ordered universe, which influences man in the interactions of his life therewith, till it becomes organised in his brain, and man thus becomes increasingly rational. It goes forth in those gleams

<sup>1</sup> Dorner, *ibid.* ii. 341, 342.

which, shining through Nature, make men feel, more or less distinctly,

". . . a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man";

to which the Reason that has become immanent in man answers back, and the Spirit is thus the source of *religion* in man. It proceeds from those various experiences in life which make men feel that there is a Higher Power watching over them, a Divine Being that cares for them, and which move their hearts to gratitude and devotion, as, most notably, in that marvellous deliverance of the Israelites from the House of Bondage, which, more than anything else, made them feel the reality of the living God and bound them to Jehovah as His people. So, again, through the influences affecting men as united in society, *morality* is evolved and the Spirit finds its voice in conscience. As in Israel, under the added influence of belief in the living holy God, a *religious* morality is created and a holy Law proclaimed. As men were led more and more to realise the holy character of God, spiritual religion tended ever to rise superior to mere external Law and ritual; but there were always elements arising from "the flesh," or lower nature of man, counteracting these uplifting influences of the Holy Spirit. These lower elements had to be broken down by darker experiences at the hand of what seemed a severe Providence, until such a sense of *want* was awakened as went forth in strong longing towards God, forming the needed preparation for the entrance of God into the conscious life of man. To follow only that line in which God through the Spirit made His complete entrance into Humanity,—in hearts of simple piety the preparation went on,—

the spiritual influences becoming actually organised, just as Reason had become organised in the intellect and morality in the conscience, till at length, as the consummation of all the Divine working, Christ appeared. He came as being at once the child of the Spirit and the Logos or Word, or Son in God, made flesh, and from Him, in His entire person, teaching, and work, that Spirit which is the essential principle of His own life proceeds in its Divine fulness. It proceeds from His entire manifestation and from His abiding Divine-human Personality. It is the Spirit of Truth, but it is deeper and wider and higher than any words can fully express. It is universal and inexhaustible. It came with growing fulness as men *felt* the influences flowing from the life and work of Christ and that which they involved; and it will continue to come in increasing power as men continue to live and think and act under these influences, and are able, through the development of their intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual natures, to enter more and more fully into the Spirit which was breathed on the world in Jesus Christ. It can only teach us and become known to us as it enters into our experience, and through the normal exercise of our God-given faculties. It does not always make its presence felt in the way in which we might expect it would, and it needs faith to hold fast our confidence in it even in the darkness. But it is *there*, deeper than all our thinking, and so that, if we are true to it, we shall not be able to *rest* in error or in evil. It can purify and inspire the heart, clarify the thoughts, and "guide us into all the truth." In its ethical and essential nature it is (as Augustine taught) *Love*,—not Love in a narrow or restricted sense, but the Holy Love that God is, the Love that is Life; in one word, it is *God*. It is the Love that spreads itself abroad in the creation, and is the spring and inspiration, the guidance and direction of all true life and endeavour of

man in every sphere,—in literature, poetry, science, art, business, and common life, as well as religion. There is no legitimate direction of energy that cannot be brought into harmony with that Holy Spirit of Truth and Love, and when the life is devoted to God, *all its energies* can be inspired and guided and made effective by It. But it is in religion—the soul of our true life—and, above all, as it comes through Christ, that the Spirit manifests Itself in its source and in its purest essence, and that we experience its uplifting influences in their fulness. As the Spirit of Love, it becomes of necessity that Spirit of Justice and Righteousness which alone can bring true good to men and establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. It leads men to take as sons of God a loving interest in nature and in man, and in all that belongs to God and that makes for the complete fulfilment of His purpose in the world,—the full realisation of the Divine Sonship in *all* men. All possible good can be traced back to that Spirit as its Fountain. It is *in that Spirit* that God is with us and that Christ is with us to-day. One with the Spirit as it is immanent in man's nature, it is the needed Divine fulness and power thereof, coming to us through Jesus Christ. It is through that Spirit that we are sanctified, enabled successfully to contend against the sin in ourselves and in the world, strengthened to do and bear the will of God, and consoled under all that we have to suffer. As the Spirit of Christ it is a Spirit of Love and Self-sacrifice which we make freely our own. Most truly is it the Paraclete, *Comforter*, or *Strengther*, as well as the Advocate that pleads Christ's cause and ours in the world. It is the creative and perfecting Spirit of God in its present movement, and through its power we can be raised into the life, and enabled in some measure to continue the work of the Son of God on earth, and be made,

ultimately, sharers in His heavenly and eternal life. *The Spirit first leads up to the Incarnation in Christ, and then comes again from it in all its fulness.*

From God in Christ the Spirit proceeds to us in these three modes—1st, As the ethical Spirit of Truth, of Righteousness, of Love, bringing home to men's hearts the reality of the Divine manifestations, especially in Christ, and kindling in the heart a Holy Love towards God and man, a confidence toward God as Father, and devotion to His cause and service in the world. As such it is the Spirit of the Divine life of Sonship in man. 2nd, As in the early Church it was the power of "miraculous" works, so, still, the Spirit inspires, instructs, inspirits, and enables us to fulfil our varied service of God and of Christ, according to the gift He has bestowed on us and the work He has given us to do. Working in us and with us, as we have faith in its presence, including that of the living Christ, and as we yield ourselves up to it, the Spirit becomes the Divine power that makes the word and work through human agency effectual, and, where men are fully possessed by it, the Spirit can be the source of such "mighty works" as the conversion of sinners and spiritual revival. Through fidelity to it the Spirit may be ours in far greater measure than we at any time possess it. And, 3rd, as the Spirit of Comfort, Strength, and helping Grace in our life and work as the sons of God, enabling us to live truly, sanctifying the soul, and sustaining us under all trials and discouragements. We may add that, of course, as being the Spirit of God, it is the power of the life everlasting. And it comes with a personal relationship and sympathy, not only because it is the Spirit of the personal God, but because it includes the living, personal Christ; so that in it we find the presence and indwelling of both the Father and the Son, and the presence of Christ with us to-day in our life.

## IN RELATION TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

"The Church," the apostle says, is "the Body of Christ." The Spirit of God and of Christ needs a Body to be its organ and expression in the world. It is therefore seeking to possess us and to use us in its service as it possessed and used our Lord Himself in the days of His flesh, and in that Spirit Christ seeks to live in us, and to work through us. As *Spirit*, it yearns for manifestation, and seeks through us to continue and complete its gracious work in the world. It is, we need ever to remember, in this *Spirit* that God and Christ are with us, and it is *through us* that God and Christ are to be manifested in the world. Therefore the Church is, as Paul taught, "the Body of Christ." This is no figure, but is meant to be a great Divine-human reality. Christ can be present in and work through the Church, or His disciples in collective unity, in a fuller measure than He can possibly do through individual members merely (with exceptions, of course); according to His word, "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Each individual can only take up and express *so much* of the Spirit, or of Christ; but in the members of His Body, the Church collectively,—each one animated by the common Spirit, and each with his own particular "gift" exercised in this service in vital union with all the others, Christ can be more completely represented and work more effectively in the world. If the entire Church were filled with the Spirit, no limit could be placed to its beneficent power, and it would thus give an impressive manifestation of the real presence of God in Christ. Therefore the stress which our Lord laid on the *unity* of His disciples, and His prayer that they all might be *one*, as He was one with the Father. The Church is a true organism. She does not exist for

herself, but for the service of the Spirit that animates her. And if all Christians and Churches were only true to this high Ideal,—fidelity to which alone makes real Christians and true Churches of *Christ*,—the work of God would be done in the world in a way in which it can never be accomplished in isolation, and Christ would be again incarnated in His followers. In this way He would come again increasingly in His power and glory. It is *just as* He is thus incarnated in His disciples that He does come a second time in actual embodied form, and in the same way as He came the first time,—through the Spirit,—in the Church which *is* His Body, His yearning love for which the apostles pictured. When the Church reaches, in “the unity of the Faith,” the “measure of the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus,” there will be one great Christ filling the world, and in that very fact “God will be all in all.”

## PART IV



## PRACTICAL



## CHAPTER I

### PRACTICAL BEARINGS IN RELATION TO THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF THE PRESENT TIME—THE PRESENT NEED

To some the Ideal referred to in the conclusion of the preceding chapter may seem not only far off, but impossible of realisation. Christianity, some will even tell us, is played out, has spent its force, and must now be content to look forward to dissolution and decay. On the contrary, if what we have seen is true, it has not yet nearly risen to the fulness of its power. To it belongs the Creative Spirit itself, in its highest and final form of manifestation, and if we are only true to that Spirit, we have the whole fulness of God to draw on, and the entire Divine Power on our side. We have the inexhaustible Fountain of Divine Truth and Love opened unto us, and we have God Himself in Divine-human form for our Leader and Paraclete.

Notwithstanding much that may still be contrary to the Spirit, the Spirit has been working in both "the Church" and "the world," and what is wanted is a clearer understanding of what the Spirit is and of how it operates, so that with full intelligent faith in its presence, and with greater receptiveness to it as it comes in its various modes, and is, above all, ever with us in the personal Christ, it may have "free course and be glorified" in the completion of its work. We desire in this chapter to set forth some of the practical bearings of that which we have seen

concerning the Spirit and the Incarnation, with reference to some of the more distinctive features of the thought and feeling amongst ourselves at the present time in relation to religion.

I. A dominant note of present-day practical theology is that which has been called "*the rediscovery of Christ*," or "*the return to Christ*." This is a great matter; for although neither our faith in Christ nor our knowledge of Him depends on the records of His earthly life alone, through these our knowledge is made more complete and our faith is often helped and strengthened. The better we know Christ, the better able shall we be to cherish and express that Spirit which is the Spirit of Christ. If the Church has lost sight of that Christ whom Paul (who is sometimes regarded as having hid Christ from men) preached, and strove so earnestly to make men conformed to, "that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," it is a great matter to get back to Him. It was certainly not *Paul* who hid from men the Christ whom he proclaimed as the Lord and Ideal of every man, but men who misunderstood Paul, who took him one-sidedly, or who, perhaps, rejected him altogether. Indeed, as the most recent students of early Church history tell us, Paul himself was very soon lost to the Church, or rather, it never came up to him; so that the probability is that, if we have really got back to the Christ of history, we shall speedily rediscover the Christ of Paul also. If we have got back once more to the historical Christ in His truth, what we need most of all now to do is to go forward again, with our new and fuller knowledge, to that *spiritual* and present Christ whom Paul preached as "the Power of God and the Wisdom of God," apart from whom the merely historical Christ will profit us little. Christ Himself taught that it was in a *new Dispensation of the Spirit* His ministry should

culminate; that it was in that Spirit men should find the abiding presence and power of God and of Himself with them; everything that He said and did was but a means towards that new outpouring of the Spirit—that “Baptism with the Holy Ghost”—which should inaugurate a new epoch in the spiritual history of men. Apart from that Spirit as the actual power of the life of Christ in us, the return to the historical Christ will do us little good; it is valuable only as it gives us *to know more truly* the Christ who seeks to live in us, and as it becomes the means of a new and fuller entrance of Christ Himself into our hearts as the present, ever-living Saviour. Otherwise we shall find ourselves quite unable to follow out the high teaching or to walk in the footsteps of the sublime Christ of history.

#### CRITICISM AND CHRIST

It is in this abiding spiritual Christ that our faith must be founded, and it is to Him directly that it must go out. Our faith does not *rest* on historical records, concerning which *Criticism* is continually raising questions and suggesting doubts. It is not merely with a man who once lived in Palestine that we have to do, but with one in whom God Himself was incarnate,—in whom He entered our Life to abide for ever,—a Christ who is Divine as well as human. It would be absurd to suppose that our faith in God as He is with us to-day depends on the conclusions of critical experts, and that the great body of Christian believers are left to the mercy of their opinions. Let Criticism have perfect freedom of investigation, for, as long as it follows truth, its results must be ultimately good; but let Christian believers be certain that the Divine-human Christ in whom they believe is for ever beyond the reach of such Criticism. Once and for all He has impressed Himself on the Mind and Conscience and Heart of the world, as the Ideal of its

Life, and as the Power that can realise that Ideal in all men. By His one great act of Sacrifice He has manifested the Love that is our Life,—the Love that God is,—so that nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken from it; and He has opened up a way whereby sinful men can find acceptance and peace with God and receive the Spirit and Power of a new life of which He is Himself the Source and Sustainer. In the words of Dean Church, addressed to Dr. Dale, what we have in Him is “an absolute Reality of the same order and as unique as the Being of God—the presence of our Lord with our Spirit—Person to Person—Life to Life—which, as long as we are true to Conscience, and do not trifle with our light, is as real as ourselves” (*Dale's Life*, p. 599). If we know *this* Christ, we know one who is the same “yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” and in whom “all the fulness dwells” both of man and of God. To His Reality we have the witness of Christian experience, in all times and climes the same; in His continuous work as “the Saviour and Friend of man” this Christ is for ever proving Himself, and is manifesting Himself to hearts that are open to Him; so that the verification of our Faith is open to all who choose to put it to the test. We should as soon doubt our own existence as doubt the reality of this Christ. And if Criticism throws us more completely back on this living Christ, so that we shall rest on nothing short of Himself, it may serve a high purpose of the Spirit.

2. *The Fatherhood of God* has also been brought into new prominence. This is a return, under the guidance of the Spirit, to that which was the fundamental teaching of Christ and His apostles, and the foundation truth of all religion. But the Fatherhood of God, taken apart from the complete manifestation of that Fatherhood in Christ, in His entire history, culminating on the Cross, and implying

the actual entrance of God into our Humanity and His abiding presence therein in the Spirit, is insufficient for our religious life. It stops short of the full truth of the Divine Fatherhood in its most moving manifestation, and of that which alone can raise us into true ethical Sonship. For the Fatherhood of God, in the Christian sense, is something much higher than the physical fatherhood of Greek philosophy and poetry, in virtue of which "we are the offspring of God"; it is ethical and spiritual, and implies on our part a "new birth" or "begetting of God" through the Spirit. Apart from that, man is manifestly *not*, in this highest sense, the *son* of God.

Indeed, in the Incarnation, rightly conceived, we have something *more* than the Fatherhood of God: we have the revelation of *Sonship* in Him as equally real, and as realising itself in our Humanity; we have the complete impartation of the Divine to the human; and it is only through this Sonship in God, that so realised itself in Christ, through Christ realising itself in us all, that our sonship can become real, and the Fatherhood of God be ours in the highest sense.

In another aspect, the view of the Incarnation of God in Christ which we have been led to, gives a new and much needed reality to the Divine Fatherhood. The heaviest burden that men feel to-day is the sense of the suffering and sorrow that are in the world. How can we believe in view of it all, and of the condition that countless human beings are left in, that God is a real *Father*? It is hard to believe it if we think of God as remaining outside of, or at a distance from, His creation. But when we see the true immanence of God as revealed in the Incarnation; when we see how the Father is eternally going forth from Himself in order to create, how truly He is *Son* as well as Father, and as Son is *in* the world and ever entering it more and more fully, till at length He becomes personally

incarnate, and then in His realised Sonship in human form takes on Himself the burden of the sorrows and even of the sins of His children, seeking them for His own with a love which gives itself wholly to win and save them,—the heaviest of all burdens is lifted, and the Fatherhood of God becomes a grand reality unto us.

3. Another noteworthy feature of our present-day religion is the increased emphasis which is laid on *character* as distinguished from mere belief in doctrines. This also is an indication of the working of that Spirit which is “the Spirit of Holiness.” Character is certainly the great thing to aim at, and it is that which the gospel has always aimed at wherever it has been truly preached. Who has ever exalted character more highly than did Paul and his fellow-apostles? It is no new discovery this; but if it be a *re-discovery* on the part of any, it is something to be profoundly thankful for. But the important question, not always duly considered is, *How are you to produce* that true and distinctive type of character which we know as *Christian*? The first thing in character is the *spirit* of a man. Mere example and precept, even where backed by the most earnest exhortation, cannot form the true character to-day, any more than they could do so two thousand years ago, and that for the same reason,—because they cannot give the Spirit. The world is certainly in many respects greatly better through the direct and indirect influences of the Spirit of Christ upon it, and that Spirit is almost universally recognised as the true Spirit of men’s life; but man is not yet emancipated from “the mind of the flesh” into “the glorious liberty of the sons of God.” It is not so much knowledge of our duty that we need, as power to perform it. “The Law” (the highest Spiritual exposition of which is given us in Christ’s “Sermon on the Mount”) speaks within us not at all indistinctly; but until we find

the power of the Spirit, the Law will be but "a ministry of condemnation" to us. When we behold the beautiful life and listen to the high ethical teaching and earnest appeals of Christ, our consciences cannot but respond; we cannot but feel moved to comply with His demands and to follow after His lofty Ideal. But to what extent does our attainment reach? Without *the Spirit* we cannot so much as truly begin. And this Christ whom we set out to follow was, from the first, God's own Son. At the very lowest possible estimate, He was born of the Spirit from the beginning. How shall *we* follow that Christ, who stands so high above us, unless in some way we too can be born of the Spirit? The re-discovery we need now to make is that the Spirit of Holiness has been given us,—poured out on the world in all the fulness of its power,—if we will only be faithful to the conditions of its operation.

4. A new *love of Truth*—leading to its pursuit in fields long closed to the intellect and supposed to be dangerous to enter—is another indication of the presence and working of that Spirit which is "the Spirit of Truth." This, again, is not a new thing, but a return to that *freedom* for which Paul so earnestly contended,—that "liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." It seems a strange and even a monstrous contradiction, that in the Church, supposed to be presided over by the Spirit of Truth Himself, there should ever have been any such thing as fear of the Truth. And yet it is not inexplicable. *The Truth* which the Spirit is essentially is not always, by any means, identical with the Truth which the intellect pursues, save that, of course, it *is* Truth. It is only the shallower and, as it were, outlying and comparatively unimportant adjuncts of the great field of Spiritual Truth that the intellect enters most ardently, and it is only such, indeed, that it can reach of itself. Its conclusions when it touches higher matters are often, if not

always, uncertain, and it is only as they can be seen and felt at length to coalesce or blend with the deeper spiritual truth, that they gain assured and confident acceptance. There is a not unreasonable fear, therefore, and a real danger, lest the intellect in its self-sufficiency and unconscious weakness may get away from that deeper Truth in which the spirit of man has found its life. But *Truth* in every sphere must ever be the object of man's search; it is the sole *authority*, for God is Truth; and a fuller possession of the Spirit of Christ would bring at once the conditions under which the love of truth would be free to follow out its investigations, and the safeguard, which would preserve it loyal to that higher truth from God, for which the mind of man, if it departs from it, can find no substitute, and in which alone it can permanently rest.

5. Another feature of present-day religion is the new interest in the *social* aspects of life, and in the bearings of religion thereon, as distinguished from a merely individualistic piety. This is, clearly, the outcome of that Spirit of Love, which is essentially a social Spirit, and a return to the Ideal of life in the Spirit as it was held up by the great apostles of Christ. It ought to be perfectly plain that nothing can ever realise that social Ideal of Brotherhood which seems so desirable, but the fulness of the Spirit of Christ itself. It is only the Spirit that created the world that can ever perfect it or make it the Kingdom of God. Outer arrangements might be ever so perfect, but without the Spirit they could never work. But in the fulness of the Spirit of Christ there is the power of all possible good, unity, harmony, and progressive life. And here we find the reconciliation of those individual and social aspects of the gospel that seem at times so conflicting. The end of the gospel in the world is certainly the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth; but it is equally the

salvation of individual souls. A Kingdom of God on the earth alone cannot give an adequate, ultimate end to the great purpose of God in the creation. It cannot do so, for the simple reason that this world cannot endure for ever; and even if it could, what of the millions who have died without having any part in this perfected kingdom? The gospel, therefore, must have as its ultimate aim the salvation of *the individual* and an *eternal* kingdom in the spiritual sphere, which is essentially the Divine and eternal. Its supreme aim must be to fit men for membership in that eternal Kingdom of God. This present world is the sphere of the life of those in whom Christ's Spirit dwells. It is through their action here that it finds its expression and develops in them the true character. It cannot find its expression or fully possess us in solitude or in isolation from our fellows. It is essentially a *social* Spirit, the Spirit of Love and Brotherhood, which not only inspires to all that is true and just, but cannot fail to "seek to do good and communicate." And it is just as individual men and women are inspired by that Spirit and carry it into all the relations of life, that the present world becomes the Kingdom of God, while they who so live are being fitted, at the same time, for membership in that eternal kingdom where Love is the only Law and the only principle that can live. To aim at individual perfection and at the eternal salvation of men *in their truth* is therefore the very means by which the present world shall be blessed and transformed into the Kingdom of our Father. For we cannot doubt that, if all men and women would only cherish and act in this Spirit of Christ, the various forms of warfare and strife that still rage on earth would be stilled, the injustice and oppression beneath which men suffer would be removed, the selfishness, in short, which unspiritual man clings to as his chief good (therein showing how truly "fallen" he is), but which experience shows to be the deadly bane of life,

would be supplanted by the Spirit of Love to God and man.

6. Once more, we may note the revived feeling after the *unity* of the Church of Christ which is making itself manifest. It is only by giving the supreme place to *the Spirit* that the Church can ever reach its unity and so its destined position of supremacy in the world. It is a "unity of the Spirit." An unspiritual unity and supremacy has been allowed to show itself, and has proved itself to become a curse; and the present divisions of Christendom save us, in large measure, from its evils. Good will not flow from a merely external union of Churches. But as the divisions can only be healed by the acceptance of the Spirit, the united and powerful Church will be essentially a spiritual Church, from which only good can emanate. It is vain to hope for the union of Christendom while the Spirit is, in so many instances, *unspiritually* conceived, and while other things are more highly exalted. Christ seeks us to be *one*; but we can only possibly be one as we are one with Himself by cherishing His Spirit. Where the Spirit is not dominant over every other consideration, we are sinning against and grieving Christ, and the full manifestation of His power in the world is prevented. Unity in the Spirit does not necessarily imply uniformity; the true Church of Christ is not a mere outward and visible organisation, but the union of all in whom Christ's Spirit rules. Yet we must not forget that the Church is *an organism*,—the Body of Christ Himself in the world. If the Spirit predominated, there would be a unity of the best and most effective kind, however many separate Churches there might be. We should see how poor everything of man is, compared with the possession of that Spirit of God, and how subordinate are even other things which we may sincerely believe to be of God, to that Spirit which is His deepest essence. If we were all striving to be true to that ever-present Spirit of

Christ and of God, remembering that it is the very same Spirit that moved in Jesus while in the flesh, inspiring His ministry of self-sacrificing Love in all its varied forms; if we remembered that to be filled with that Spirit is to be filled with Truth and Love, with the ethical life of God Himself,—we could not but look upon our doctrines and Church interests as entirely subordinate to the interests of the Spirit; Christ Himself would come to occupy the place which He longs for in our hearts; the power of God would make itself manifest in our midst, and the work of God would be done in the world. We pray to God to do this and that for the world; but the fault does not lie with God, but with men who are unreceptive of the Spirit through which He works, or positively disobedient to it. It is not His will that His Church should be so powerless, or that so many millions should sit in heathen darkness or be oppressed under manifold forms of evil. He has sent forth the Spirit that could “heal them,” that could save and bless the whole world; but that Spirit needs human instruments to work with. When that Spirit possesses us, we shall see clearly that our various ecclesiastical institutions and ordinances are nothing whatever to Him, save as they are the organs of His Truth and Love and Grace. Whether our Churches were formally united or not, the spirit of unity and of Christ-like endeavour would animate them all; all truly Christian hearts would know themselves to be one, and the grand vision of Paul would in time be realised, when he saw the members of Christ leaving all that divided them for “the one Body and the one Spirit” (the Body and Spirit of Christ); “the one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one Hope, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all,” in that Holy Spirit which is at once the Spirit of God and of Christ,—the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Spirit of men as the sons of God, and of Brotherhood uniting mankind as the family of God on the earth.

## ERRORS, SCEPTICISM, UNBELIEF

*On the other hand*, we witness the recrudescence of *religious errors*, along with *scepticism* and *unbelief*.

1. What can ever meet effectually that craving for contact with spiritual realities which leads many devout souls towards *sacramentarianism*, and which keeps *sacerdotalism* alive, save the realisation of the actual presence of God and of Christ in that Holy Spirit in which we live and move and have our being? How else can we ever find the *Real Presence* of Christ? Men who believe in that constant, personal presence of Christ, so abundantly testified in the Scriptures and attested in the experience of His people, need no Priest to bring that presence to them through the consecration of material symbols, and it is only the want of *this* faith that necessitates such attempts to meet a real want of the human spirit. The craving for some material or sensible mediation is not unnatural; for it is extremely difficult for men to live continuously in the *vivid* realisation of the purely spiritual. "We walk by faith, not by sight." But if it be the case that some souls need the help of such symbols to enable them to realise the presence and grace of Christ, it cannot be because He is *in* these symbols in any fuller way than He is in all receptive hearts, and the danger is that the craving for more than a spiritual presence, and the looking to such exceptional media, may blind the spiritual vision to the constant real presence of Christ. To look for Him in these chiefly is like "looking for the sunshine in burning-glasses" mainly. If Christ were not with us *always*, how could He be brought through any act of man into those symbols that are supposed to specially impart His grace? Their very use is thus a testimony to the reality of that which should make them needless.

2. We have sought throughout to show how the opposite tendency to mere *Theism* and the craving for an entirely direct relation of the human spirit to the Father of Spirits is met, not through discarding Christ as the New Testament presents Him to us, but through spiritual union with Him as He in whom God as Son has realised the Divine life in man, and comes to realise that same Divine life in direct relation to Himself as Father, in us all. The Christian truth is that our religious life is realised directly *towards* the Father, but *through* the Son and *in* the Holy Spirit, and this, besides answering the pressing questions that Theism cannot answer, gives us a much fuller conception of God, is true to His actual manifestations in fact and life, and brings us that spiritual help in our life of sonship which Theism cannot supply.

3. There are others again who tell us that they are, for various reasons, *unable to believe* in the dogmas of Ecclesiastical Christianity, and that, therefore, they must stand aloof from our Churches, or that, if they attend them, they cannot take any vital interest in their work. Let such leave aside these doctrines in the meantime, if they cannot believe in them, and let them earnestly ask themselves whether the Holy, *ethical* Spirit of Christ is not worthy of all acceptance? Doctrines are only of consequence as they stand related to the Spirit, as they minister to and express the Spirit; it is this that gives them their whole importance. The Spirit is greater than any doctrines by which we seek to express it, and men may feel and yield themselves to its influences, even though unable to give intellectual assent to the doctrines which mediate them, as these have been formulated by others. It is not "the letter" but "the Spirit" that saves, although the letter is also necessary as the expression of the Spirit. Let those who cannot believe, therefore, ask themselves—Is not the

ethical Spirit of Christ the true, and therefore the Divine, principle that ought to animate every man's life? Can we, after all these centuries of growing knowledge, get, or even conceive, anything higher or better, more like God and more beneficial to humanity? Let such begin with this ethical faith, and perhaps they will find themselves led on further by that Spirit which is also the Spirit of Truth, and may learn the meaning of Christ's words when He said, "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." Such may gradually come to feel the Spirit of the gospel itself stealing into their hearts,—a sense of sin forming itself within their consciences, which can only be appeased in God's way of peace through the Cross of Christ; and a faith, however undefined, in God's great forgiving Love, as it comes to men through Christ, giving them peace and confidence toward God, kindling an answering love on the altar of their hearts, and leading them into the liberty of those who cry, "Abba, Father!" Or they may be gradually led so to feel their own weakness and proneness to evil, that their hearts shall cry out for the help of a mightier strength, and, crying in the darkness and desolation of their souls to Christ, *if perchance there be a living Christ who can help them*, shall find in actual experience such an answer to their cry as shall convince them of the reality of that Presence, and lead them by degrees into the full faith in and knowledge of Himself.

4. Some say, indeed, that they cannot even believe in *God*, that they see no sign of Him in all the world, whether they look without or within. But God, if there is a God at all, is, let us be sure, *the perfect ethical Spirit*; and let those who say that they cannot find God anywhere ask themselves whether this Holy Spirit that comes in Christ seeking to possess them be not, verily, *God* in His highest conceivable

presence and manifestation? God *is* Spirit, and in vain shall we look for any other God than He who is with us in that Holy Spirit, which comes to us in Christ as the highest manifestation of that Power that has from the first been working in the world. The greatest of all errors, perhaps, within the Church as well as outside of it, and the source of most of the unprofitable disputes and strange errors that men have fallen into, is forgetting the essentially *Ethical* character of God, and of His Incarnation in Christ. It is (to use the words of Dr. Dorner, written many years ago) "the error that an aseity, infinitude, omnipotence, rent asunder from holy Love, and not holy Love itself, constitute the highest, the inmost in God, yea, His very essence and nature" (*Person of Christ*, Div. ii. vol. ii. p. 263).

Hence the importance of clearing away misconceptions that have gathered round the thought of God, and the need of endeavouring to make it clear that it is *the one personal, Ethical* God who is in Himself Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that comes to us in Christ, realising His life of Sonship in human form, doing for us what we most of all need, and abiding with us in Divine-human, personal form in that Holy Spirit of which the personal Christ is the highest and permanent expression. And hence the importance of that view of the Spirit and the Incarnation which we have sought to present, which shows that Spirit of God and of Christ to be the creative Spirit itself in its highest expression, coming to us, not as the result of some *isolated* system of Redemption, which breaks into, or is grafted on to the great world-process, but as the culmination of that great process itself; not an afterthought of God, or a remedy, as man devises and applies remedies to his failing works, but the highest outcome of the eternal purpose and of the working of the Divine Wisdom and Love,—that in which God Himself comes to be with men to raise them to the eternal life of Sonship toward Himself, and of Brotherhood towards one another.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FULNESS OF THE SPIRIT

EVERYTHING shows us that "*the Spirit*" is indeed the great thing in Christianity, and that what is wanted is, first, the serious recognition of this fact, along with a clear apprehension of what the Spirit is; and, secondly, to ask earnestly, How can men be made partakers of that Spirit in its fulness? As the late Principal Cairns said in one of his latest utterances: "A simpler creed is only revealing the grand perspective of the faith, and the great question is acknowledged to be, 'How is the gospel by a Divine Spirit to become the life of God in every soul?'"<sup>1</sup>

### THE SPIRIT NEEDS US

It is a commonplace of religious speech to say that the great want of the Church is the Spirit. This is true; but it would be still more helpful to remember that *the great want of the Spirit is the Church*. The first essential thing is to realise that the Spirit is *here* in all its fulness, seeking to possess us, to find its manifestation, and to do its work in us and through us in the world; that it is *as Spirit* and *in this Holy Spirit* that Christ is with us and that God is with us, seeking to use us as the instruments of the Divine grace and working. This purely spiritual presence of God in Christ, and His continuous Incarnation and work in the world through His spiritual indwelling in our hearts, is a

<sup>1</sup> *Life of John Cairns*, p. 746.

truth which we have been very slow to learn, and the consequence is widespread unbelief in any real presence of Christ at all. Men look merely at what is external, and do not see how the manifestation of the Spirit is hindered by the blindness and unfaithfulness of those to whom it comes. They read the history of the Christian centuries, and observe the actual condition of both the Church and the world to-day, and they see much that seems inconsistent with any real presence and action of Christ. It is forgotten, not only that the Spirit, as immanent, is, in one aspect, as a seed or principle deposited by Christ in the world, which can only find its fruition (as Neander taught so insistently) slowly and according to the laws of human development, "partaking often, externally, in those human elements which it strives to purify and perfect"; but also that Christ, in His personal life and action, is no longer present *in* the world of Time and Sense, but is a *spiritual* Presence in the hearts of His disciples. If Christ had continued present in that world of Time and Sense which He so distinctly said He *left* in order to return to the Father, would not the history of the Christian Church have been in many respects very different? and if He were still present, *in that sense*, in the world, would not the appearance presented by both the Church and the world be greatly other than that which it is? Would millions of men and women, even in Christendom, be left to a worship that is largely superstitious, in Churches that too often contradict all that is highest and best in Christ? Would the heathen be left in darkness; would the sorrowing sit uncomforted; would the oppressed and destroyed cry out for help in vain; would war and strife continue to devastate the earth? Why are things in both the Church and the world left to go on as they do, if God or Christ is *in* the world otherwise than in the Spirit? To many, in the awful silence of unanswered prayers for that which is

undoubtedly just and good and in entire harmony with the mind of Christ, as we know it, it often seems as if there were no Christ and no God at all; or as if we had not in Christ been brought into any nearer relation to the Divine and eternal. This is because we have got into the way of thinking and speaking as if Christ were still in some way present in the world of Time and Sense, and of praying to Him to do things which He cannot do now, but expects those who believe in Him to do in the power of His Spirit within them, or which, in other words, He can only do *through them*. Here is our Divine mission and our great responsibility. In the Spirit, and spiritually, Christ can and does operate, but the sphere of His operation is the spiritual realm within, and His working such as will not overbear or interfere with our human freedom, or with a genuine *development* of our life, whether individually or socially; it needs a free response on our part, and it is *this* that is not given. Christ has told us plainly that He is not now "in the world." "I came into the world," He said; "again I leave the world and go to the Father." But *we* are in the world, and His Spirit is in us, and to *us* He looks to represent Him and to do His present work in the world through the power of His Spirit within us. On *ourselves* rests the responsibility for many of those things concerning which we pray in vain to Christ. Christ is *Spirit* now, and Spirit in order to manifest itself needs a material vesture wherein to appear, and a bodily organism wherewith to work. These Christ seeks to find in *us*, and His Spirit in us is often for them "groaning with groanings which cannot be uttered." It is no figure, therefore, when the Church is represented as "the Body of Christ." It may be such in a more literal sense than we have dared to imagine. May it not be that, as it is only through the body that our own spirit can be in contact with, gain knowledge from, and operate on, the external world, so it

is only *through us* as His Body that Christ can be in contact with and operate on the world? It is *Christ in us, and God in Christ.* There may be thus a significance in prayer and a work for us as "the Lord's remembrancers," as well as His members or instruments, greater than we may imagine.

#### THE SPIRIT COMES THROUGH OUR OWN CONSCIOUSNESS

It is, further, very necessary to remember that the Holy Spirit as it comes to us, in its ethical influences and inspirations especially, cannot be sharply distinguished by us from our own spirits, and that we are therefore apt to overlook its presence. More intimately than our bodies are the mingling of spirit and matter, does the Divine, immanent Spirit mingle with ours. It must come to us through *our* consciousness. It is, says Paul, a Spirit that we "*received*" from God,—one that is "*given*" by God to dwell in us; and although it is certainly different from our own spirits, and is "*the soul of our soul,*" it must make itself felt within us through our own faculties. It comes to us in the highest, holiest, most loving, and best feelings that stir even momentarily within us, or that, as it were, whisper themselves in the soul, in harmony with "*the wisdom that is from above.*" If we fall in with it, yielding ourselves up confidently to the Spirit as it thus comes to us, it becomes in us a Spirit of peace and power, and, on due occasion, of joy—the "*joy in the Holy Ghost.*" But if we are not quick to listen and respond, if we turn away from the Truth that speaks to us, or from the gentle Love that would win and move us, or if we fail to "*exercise ourselves unto godliness,*" as the apostle says—the Spirit that would work through us, and at the same time bless us, cannot make its presence felt, and we are in danger of "*quenching the Spirit.*"

## PRAYER FOR THE SPIRIT

When, therefore, we ask, "How are we to be filled with the Spirit?" the very question, if we rightly understand it, so far suggests its own answer. It is not *we* who are seeking a Spirit to fill us, but a Spirit that is earnestly longing for and seeking us. We are continually told to *pray* for the Spirit, and there is a sense in which it is, doubtless, right and inevitable for us to do so. Prayer is the attitude of soul for its reception,—the disciples were praying when its Presence was first realised by them. But still it is true that after that time we never read in the New Testament of prayers *for* the Spirit. Men are there exhorted to believe, and are assured that, if they do so, they shall receive the Spirit; they are urged to "*cherish* the Spirit," to "*walk in the Spirit*," to "*quench not the Spirit*," to "*be filled with the Spirit*" (or in Spirit). The apostle prays that the Spirit may do great things for believers, but does not teach them to pray for that which is the very element of their spiritual life. As well might the plant pray for the air and the sunshine as Christian men pray for the Spirit as if it were something *absent* or *distant*. If we do pray for it (and it is, perhaps, inevitable that we should do so), let us at least remember that it is the Spirit itself that inspires our prayers; that the Spirit is *within* us; that we live in "*the Dispensation of the Spirit*," which surely means that the Spirit has been given. "What," asks Paul, "*know ye not as to your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*" If, like the first disciples, we pray, let us also at the same time, like them, search the Scriptures and think of Christ, till, like them also, we become conscious of His spiritual presence with us.

What is wanted is *Faith* and *Receptivity*, followed by

*Fidelity* ;—Faith that the Spirit has been given us in all its fulness in Jesus Christ, and that it is ever with us in Him in personal nearness and fulness of spiritual power; *Receptivity*,—openness to the Spirit's influences, as it comes to us through Christ, even moving *within* us, and willingness to serve it as its organs, and (like those first disciples again) as *witnesses* to the reality of a living Lord and Saviour; and *Fidelity* to its teaching and inspiration in the life. We may rightly pray for the Spirit in larger measure than that in which we individually possess it, and Christ can, in answer to our prayers, teach and help us in many ways through His Spirit; but let us not think of the Spirit as if it were something distant, or forget the conditions of its indwelling; let *us* be true to it as it already rises within us. We are in danger of praying for the Spirit while we are ignoring its very presence within our own souls. It is nearer us than the air that we breathe or the light in which we rejoice to live our physical life. We live and move and have our being in that Spirit; it is the very element of our highest life, and it flows into our hearts and fills them just as we are *receptive* of *It*.

#### MISTAKES CONCERNING THE SPIRIT

Strange as it may seem, one of the commonest mistakes concerning the Spirit is forgetting that it is the very Spirit of God Himself—God's living presence with us—and that, being the Spirit of God, it is essentially the Spirit of Holy *Love* in our hearts. It is that Love of God that comes to us through Christ and seeks to possess us. To be filled with Holy Love, is to be filled with the Spirit; where Love dwells, God dwells, and there will be produced all those fruits of Righteousness and Kindness and true Holiness of which Love is the Source. It was to him who should keep His great new commandment of “ Love one to

another as I have loved you" that Jesus made that wonderful promise, "We will come to him, and make our abode with him." Too often are we found praying for the Spirit as if He were some unethical Power, forgetting His essential nature as Love. It is the want of this Love in our hearts that is the secret of the seeming absence of the Holy Spirit, and we only delude ourselves if we imagine that we can have that Spirit dwelling in us and working through us as Something other than the Spirit of Holy Love. "He that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The Spirit comes to us through Christ and brings us the personal presence of Christ; but it always comes, primarily, as a holy Ethical influence. Christ Himself was the Divine Love incarnate—Love was the deepest spring of His devoted Divine-human life, and in us that Spirit of Christ, without which we are "none of His," is the filial Spirit of Holy Love toward God and of brotherly self-sacrificing Love toward our fellow-men—while maintaining Truth and Righteousness. The Spirit of God and of Christ is essentially a loving, unselfish, self-sacrificing Spirit, and it is because we have so little of these Divine elements in our life that we have so little of the power of the Spirit.

We sometimes forget, too, that, as the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit is one with the light that shines in Reason and with the voice that speaks in Conscience,—that, indeed, all that is beautiful and good in man is the fruit of the same Spirit of God and of Christ, and that no part of our life is to be excluded from its influence. It is the Spirit of all Truth, of all Holy Love, of all Righteousness and Goodness in their Divine fulness. If we depart from these, or be not loyal to these, we cannot have the Spirit. Some, forgetting that the Spirit is essentially ethical and rational, have been led into strange and sometimes unholy delusions; others, forgetting that the Spirit comes to us from the *entire* manifestation of God in Christ, have believed themselves to

possess it, or even to be filled with it, while the practical teaching of Christ and the things that are true and just and loving in the common daily life have been left behind them.

Some, forgetting that the Spirit is that of unity, have *wilfully* severed themselves from their fellow-Christians and have gone off into divisive courses and exclusive camps of their own. All Churches and sects of Christians believe themselves to be guided by the Spirit, even though it is into the most complete opposition to each other. Of course, Truth is infinite, and we cannot all grasp precisely the same phase of it; but where there is *contradiction* and "party" (heresy in the apostolic sense) there must be something wrong. And how often have the views of truth which we have believed ourselves led into by the Spirit and the ecclesiastical systems which we have formed under what we have deemed His influence, been upheld and maintained in anything but the gentle Spirit of Christ? The "sweet reasonableness of Jesus" has been too greatly forgotten. Even when we pray for the Spirit, we are apt to forget that it is the same gracious Spirit as was manifested in the Christ of the Gospels—"the well-known Christ"—dwelling in the hearts of His followers and moving them to seek the same ends as He Himself sought on earth and in the same spirit. Even in the apostles' days there were "other spirits," and we still need to "try the spirits whether they be of God." Any spirit that would lead us to breathe forth something different from that which we see proceeding from Christ in His life on earth, or to seek other ends than He sought, is not of God.

There are some who, even while they pray for the Spirit, fail to see that it is, indeed, the supreme reality in Christianity; that doctrines and beliefs and practices are only of value as they are the expression of the Spirit and as they help to make men partakers of it. They have not been emancipated from the old Jewish

thraldom to the letter; they suffer "the letter" to hide "the Spirit" from their eyes.

On the other hand, there are those who, realising that the Spirit is the great thing in Christianity, fail to see how the Spirit in its fulness must be mediated *through Christ* and the truth concerning Him in His relation to God and to ourselves. They would do away with those doctrines which have been the very means of preserving and expressing the Spirit of Christ in the world. It is not merely to ignorant enthusiasts that Luther's memorable words are applicable: "They cry Spirit, Spirit, yet break down all the bridges by which the Spirit can enter." The Spirit in its ethical influences always comes to us through the *facts* of Creation, History, Redemption, and experience, and through the life and word of Truth. By so much as we ignore or belittle these, we close our ears to the voices of the Spirit.

At the same time, while we recognise the Spirit in those ethical influences, we must beware lest we separate them in thought from God or from the living, personal Christ, in whom God comes to us in His highest manifestation. While not *in* the world of Time and Sense, Christ can find entrance and impart light and strength to such hearts as by obedience to the Truth are opened to Him and are in sympathy with Himself and with the Father in Him. We are not left to ourselves, or to the operation of impersonal influences merely. God, both as Father and as Son, is with us in the Spirit, and He is with us in Divine-human personal form in Christ, in whom the Divine Sonship realised itself in our Humanity. To leave out this presence of God in Christ is to ignore that which is most distinctively new in Christianity, and one of its most precious elements. The Spirit that proceeds from the Divine manifestation in Christ is that in which God comes to win us to Himself as His sons

and daughters, and to fill us with His Presence and Power. When we yield ourselves up to and cherish that Spirit, we have in it the presence of both God and Christ, and in that Spirit Christ can be the present and abiding Paraclete of those who trust Him, guiding them into the truth, strengthening, upholding, and perfecting them, and enabling them effectually to serve Him. It is the want of a full trust in the living Christ who seeks to realise His own life in us and to continue His work through us, the lack of a full confidence in His spiritual presence and power, and of that "venture" of faith which commits ourselves wholly to Him and trusts the all-sufficiency of His Grace, that is the chief source of our weakness.

And here it is most essential that we do not go by *feeling*, but stand in faith and obedience. There are still those who look for the presence of Christ or of the Spirit with them in some physical or semi-physical way, and they can only believe in that presence and indwelling when they experience strong excitement or when joyous feelings fill their souls. Others, again, truly anxious to serve Christ, are depressed and miserable because of their lack of, or only very occasional participation in, any such experiences, which, indeed, depend largely on circumstances and on physical states. It seems sometimes as if they were left wholly to themselves, to stumble on through the darkness unlighted and unaided. It is of the greatest importance, therefore, to remember that the presence that we are asked to believe in is Ethical and *spiritual* (while personal), and is not, in any sense, physical. While joy is undoubtedly a fruit of the Spirit, such joy can only come where there is *faith*, and we must *believe* in that spiritual presence whether we *feel* anything or not. The feeling will come, as it is good for us, and it is often, as all Christian experience testifies, when we feel least that Christ is most truly with us and is working most effectu-

ally in and through us. When we are most faithful to His Spirit and principles we are most faithful to Himself, and He is then most closely united with us, though we see Him not. In His own time and way He will manifest Himself. It is for us to believe and act.

#### FAITH IN AND SELF-SURRENDER TO CHRIST

Since it is as the Spirit of Christ that the Spirit of God comes to us in its highest manifestation, if we would be filled with the Spirit, we must surrender ourselves and commit ourselves wholly to Christ as being all that God has made Him unto us, and which in its fulness Christ ever seeks to be unto us. We would not in any way seek to limit the action of the Spirit of God, nor would we suggest that only in one fixed mode can men be brought under its influences. While maintaining that in every case, by whatever means, men must be born into the life of the Spirit, we would be far from seeking to confine the conditions of the Spirit's action to the knowledge of the historically manifested Christ, or to faith in Him in some one definite form; we would remember that the Spirit is the universal Spirit of God, and has many ways of working. But we are speaking now of *the normal way* to full possession of the Spirit of God and of Christ, as it is presented in that New Testament which must ever be the Charter of Christianity. Taking this for our guide, we must say that we cannot have the Spirit of Christ in its truth and fulness, so as to enter the complete life of the Spirit, apart from the knowledge of Christ and faith in Him as that which He is made unto us of God. We cannot have it thus by a *partial* reception of Christ. We must receive Christ as He comes presenting Himself to us and offering Himself unto us; and this is so, not for arbitrary reasons, but in the nature of the case. We

cannot, for example, have "the fulness of the Spirit of Christ if we believe in Him merely as our Example and Teacher, with no sense of our need of Him as our Saviour. If we do not see our own sinfulness and inability of ourselves to present the perfect Righteousness which God requires, or to rise completely above the natural, animal man, or self, into the spiritual, unselfish, love-centred life of the sons of God; if, in any measure, we rely on ourselves or think that we are anything in ourselves as if we could do anything of ourselves,—we lack the primary and most essential requirement for possession by the Spirit of Christ and of God, namely, *entire self-renunciation*. We are still clinging to self, as if it were something in itself over against God, instead of cherishing the Spirit of that Son who "could do nothing of Himself," and was therefore filled with God. As the old Hymn says—

"Go out, God will go in ;  
Die thou and let Him live ;  
Be not, and He will be ;  
Wait, and He'll all things give."

Or, as the modern poet has expressed it—

"We feel we are nothing—for all is Thou and in Thee ;  
We feel we are something—that also has come from Thee ;  
We know we are nothing—but Thou wilt help us to be.  
Hallowed be Thy name—Hallelujah."—(Tennyson, 'De Profundis.'

#### THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

It is just because the doctrines of Grace tend to empty men of Self that they are so important in relation to the fulness of the Spirit. It is often objected to these doctrines that they humble men so greatly. They are *meant* to do so; there is nothing man so much needs as humbling; it is the necessary prelude to the highest uplifting, as

Jesus so often taught. It is just in this lies the saving power of the gospel. It is meant so to humble men as to break down and rid them of that *self* which is the very soul of sin, and to open the heart to God in Christ so that He may become the principle of the Divine life within them. When we cover up the humbling truths of the gospel, we close one of the chief avenues of the Spirit to the human heart. It is to the heart conscious of its need that, from the Cross, where God as incarnate in His Son "gave Himself for us," that power of the Spirit comes which can most speedily and effectually destroy self, in principle at least, and kindle in our hearts that new Divine life of Love which is the life of the Spirit—the life of God in man. The teaching that simply bids us rise and follow Christ as our Example and Teacher, or that calls on us to make the Spirit of Christ the Spirit of our lives, as if that were something we could forthwith do by our own power, without bidding us at the same time see and feel our need of Christ as our Saviour, may rouse to heroic endeavour after the Christian life, and produce much fruit that is good and useful to the world; but it can never bring men into full possession of the true Christian Spirit as we see it in Jesus Himself. One of the primary functions of the Spirit, Christ said, should be to "*convince the world of sin.*" This conviction of sin and need is the first thing; to be followed by the humble and believing appropriation of salvation in Christ, and the surrender of the soul to Him in growing fulness and completeness. As self dies, Christ, by His Spirit, lives in us. As William Law writes: "You may now see, Academicus, with what great reason I have called you, at your first setting out, to this great point, the total dying to self, as the only foundation of a solid piety. All the fine things you hear or read of an inward and spiritual life in God, all your expectations

of the light and Holy Spirit of God, will become a falsehood to your soul, till you only seek for them through death to self." It is just because the gospel is divinely adapted to produce that utter death to self and that life to God which Jesus called for in His personal teaching, and of which His own life of Sonship is the Supreme Example, that it is such an organ of the Spirit in its fulness.

#### EVANGELICALISM

It is because Evangelicalism has been true to this central element of the gospel, and has held up to men a present, free, and full salvation in Christ, wholly of grace and through faith, that it has, in spite of errors and weaknesses, possessed a power which has not belonged to other forms of Christianity. Sometimes the evangelical faith, as seen in its most ardent disciples, has about it much that is calculated to repel earnest souls; but none the less is it impossible to leave it behind and yet retain "the power of God unto salvation." That which proved itself such a mighty instrument in the experience and in the hands of Paul and Luther and Wesley, must be firmly grasped and held fast if we would carry to men the fulness of the power of the Holy Spirit. What Evangelicalism needs is to be truer to its own principle of the life and liberty of the sons of God. It needs to realise more fully that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of *all* truth and of all goodness,—in its very essence the Divine Spirit of Truth and Love,—and that to be true to the Spirit we must be loyal to it *however* it comes to us; it needs to shake itself free from all unworthy fear of Truth; to avoid a mere pietism in which the religious life stands in isolation, and salvation is in danger of becoming a luxury, or even a new form of selfishness; to cherish the Spirit as the unifying, sanctifying

Spirit of all true life, and to follow its guidance into all truth and justice, and into all pure joy and goodness; to rise to a larger Faith in God, and to cherish worthier thoughts concerning Him,—in a word, to recognise that God *is* Truth and *is* Love, and that He can only be truly honoured and served by those who follow Truth and who walk in Love. It needs, moreover, to see that the doctrines of grace are not the products of an *isolated* scheme of Redemption, but essential elements in God's great world-process, designed to bring, not merely an individual salvation, which *might* be held and cherished selfishly and in indifference to the life around us, but to bring God's kingdom on the earth and to make the Sonship of believers manifest in a real human Brotherhood. In order to avoid a possible "spiritual pride," it needs also to realise that even before "believing" all men have a relation to Christ as their Head, if they would only be true to it; that "believing" *is* realising this and being true to it, since Faith can *create* nothing, but can only grasp what God has created and provided for it.

Above all, if we are to have the Spirit with us in power, we must, while the gospel of a free salvation through faith is held fast, realise and make perfectly plain that it is *sin* that is the real evil from which Christ saves us, and the only thing that we have to fear; that sin is everything that is opposed to the Love and Truth and Righteousness that God is, and that merely to trust in Christ as a Saviour without yielding our hearts to Him as representing both God and man to us, so that in accepting Him we are brought into right relations to both, is insufficient, and will ultimately avail us nothing. It is still *self* merely that is seeking such an *external* salvation as we may fancy Christ can give us; whereas the true salvation must be deliverance *from self*. What Christ seeks to do for us as our Saviour, is to inspire us with the *right spirit* toward both God and

man : this is the object of "the grace of God that bringeth salvation"; and it is still possible even for believers to "receive the grace of God in vain." That which was represented in Christ must ultimately be realised in us, and it is in and through the indwelling of His own living Spirit within us, that our entire, actual salvation is to be effected. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His," and it is only "if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in us" that we can share in the eternal life of Christ. Without the *character* of the sons of God, in its essential principle, as the dominant principle of our life, however far short we may come of its full realisation here on earth, our faith is entirely vain.

The Spirit is, we need to remember, *very sensitive*, and it is possible not only to "grieve" but to "quench the Spirit." *Faith* is always an essential condition of the full experience of its presence and power, and of the presence of Christ therein. Unbelief, mistrust, and consequent gloom and grieving on our part will tend greatly to deprive us of its influences ; and we are very apt to fall into such gloom and grieving, or spiritual depression, just because the presence that is with us is wholly spiritual, and not to be in any way discerned by sense. As we believe and are faithful, the Holy Spirit can assuredly make itself felt in our spirits, but we are so involved in sense that we do not always thus realise it as we would fain do. Whilst here in the body we are in a sense "absent from the Lord"; we must "walk by faith, not by sight," and there are wise reasons why it should be so. The sensitiveness of the Spirit was well understood by some in the early Church, and finds suggestive expression in the "Pastor" of Hermas. "Wherefore," we read there, "crush not the Holy Spirit which dwells in you, lest He entreat God against you and withdraw from you. For the Spirit of God which has been granted us to

dwell in this body doth not endure grief or straitness. Wherefore put on cheerfulness, which is always agreeable and acceptable to God, and rejoice in it"; for "the Holy Spirit which is given to man is a cheerful Spirit" (Hermas II., Command x. 18-20). But the worst of gloom is, as the same counsel explains, that it tends to evil; and all that is of sin or of the lower self—all anger, passion, self-indulgence, self-seeking, non-acceptance of God's will,—all that is not of Love, equally with all that is not of Faith, grieves and, if persisted in, quenches the Spirit.

It is only as the Spirit of Christ becomes our Spirit, and the dominating principle of our entire life in the world, that we are being saved from that "flesh," the end of which is "death," and that our eternal life and conformity to Christ in His glory become even possible. It is only thus that the Spirit becomes in us that "well of water springing up into eternal life" of which Christ spake, making us in turn living fountains of the Spirit to others, according to that other saying of His which "He spake of the Spirit which they who believe on Him should receive," that "out of their midst should flow rivers of living water," to sweeten, refresh, gladden, purify, fertilise, and enrich the weary, waiting earth. The secret of being filled with the Spirit is faith in and entire self-surrender and committal to Christ, leading to such abiding in Him, through keeping His word,—which is, above all, His great commandment of *Love*,—that *He* abides in us, and, along with the Father, lives in and works through us.

Christ, who has "returned to the Father," and has left *us* as His representatives in the world, has promised that, if we ask anything in His name, *i.e.* as in Spiritual union with Him and as representing Him in the world, it shall be done unto us; and He has assured us that, as present with the

Father, He will enable us to do "greater works" than those which He did while here under the limitations of a single form in the flesh. Such works we understand to be essentially *spiritual* works, done through the power of that Spirit which He should "send from the Father," and in which both He and the Father should come to dwell in men. These promises still stand unrevoked and unexhausted; but without faith in the real presence of God in that Spirit, and complete self-surrender to Christ, as in Him God comes to us in His fatherly love and seeks to possess and use us in His service, the Spirit cannot find its full expression or do its blessed work, in ourselves, and through us in the world. In this presence of God and of Christ with us, yea, within us, in the Holy Spirit, there are possibilities implicit, far beyond aught that has "entered into the heart of man." May He whose Spirit it is give us all to understand what it is to be privileged to live in "the Dispensation of the Spirit," and to be "filled unto all the fulness of God."



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